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LIGHT FROM BEYOND





# LIGHT FROM BEYOND

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# LIGHT FROM BEYOND

To Cheer the Christian Pilgrim

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "LIFE: A BOOK FOR YOUNG MEN"

STRAHAN & CO.

56 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON

1872

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I.

**Light from Beyond.**

B

LEAD kindly, Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
    Lead Thou me on.  
The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
    Lead Thou me on.  
Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that 'Thou  
    Should'st lead me on.  
I loved to choose and see my path—but now  
    Lead Thou me on.  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will : remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still  
    Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
    The night is gone.  
And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

J. H. NEWMAN.

## I.

### LIGHT FROM BEYOND.

OF all things, men dislike most being gloomy. Rightly so, for the most fortunate have troubles enough to need some counterpoise of pleasure. Our first thought is living; our next, living happily. None of us like cloudy weather if we can get blue sky. The difficulty is, to find happiness worth the name. Animal spirits only serve in health and sunshine; let the body droop, or affairs get wrong, or trials enter our circle, and they leave us when we need them most. Competence, or wealth, are as unsatisfying, for they, too, fail us, when the heart is overshadowed. They can do much to soothe and temper pain, but only within certain limits, and are wholly worthless when the soul is sick. An embroidered slipper will not ease an aching foot, nor a costly ring an ailing finger. A crown may make the temples throb,

but cannot cure them, and a velvet robe may hide a heavy heart, but cannot touch its sorrow. Pleasure, sought for its own sake, is only a mocking shadow—a dream that serves us till it break, but leaves us the lonelier after all. Companions, amusements, study, dissipation, are only diversions of our thoughts from cares and heaviness that wait till we return again into ourselves, to burden us afresh. After all, it is not what is round, but what is in us; not what we have, but what we are, that makes us really happy. We want a cheery fire on the hearth of our own spirits; a fire always clear—always at our command. Without that, we have to go abroad for comfort, and we return only to find our bosoms dark and cold. The mind is its own place, and must find its happiness in itself, or remain discontented, whatever its outward lot.

Thank God, we are not left to vain regrets and disappointments. What this life fails to give, is richly furnished by the life beyond. He who made us knows our wants, and has provided for them. Comfort, encouragement, and support, in every change and circumstance of our condition, are ever near us in the great and

precious promises He has vouchsafed to all his children. There is no burden they do not lighten or remove; no darkness they do not brighten; no weakness they do not strengthen; no fears they do not calm; no worthy aspirations they do not guide and justify. Our true source of dispeace is dissatisfaction with ourselves; they give us, in its place, the peace that passes understanding, in an interest in Christ. Our heaviest burden is our sins; they are all forgiven us, if we be his. In our deepest darkness, He is the bright and morning star. In our gloomiest fears, He comes to us over the waters and makes a great calm. In our feeblest weakness, He whispers to us that his grace is sufficient for us. In our highest aspirations, He leads us to the Mount of Vision and shews us what God has prepared for them that love Him, beyond what our hearts could have asked or thought.

Yes! life has much of joy and brightness in it, but it has its troubles as well: some of our own making; some that we cannot avoid; and, before us all, lies the solemn mystery of the grave. Our affairs, our health, our friends, and, above all, our spiritual interests, often make us

feel that nothing in life can meet our wants, and that we need higher wisdom and a stronger arm than our own. We should be helpless, if we had not God to whom to go. But, blessed be his name, if we be his, there is no trial or temptation in which we may not seek his face, and plead some sweet promise to aid us in our need. The best of Christians often feels irresolute, but the gracious assurances of his Heavenly Father confirm him in his purpose to press on; they guide him as he goes; they make his troubles by the way seem light, and as his journey ends, they shine serenely on him from beyond the river. The good hope of eternal life, is, to the saint, like the star in the East, guiding him to where he will ere long find Him whom his soul loveth. It stands over the better land, where Christ himself waits for him. Without its cheering brightness, he would often, like Israel, be discouraged because of the way; would often give up in despair; often go back to the life he has left; often sit down bewildered. It is a hard thing to endure to the end, for duty is often doubtful, and cares, and distractions, and troubles, confuse and dishearten us, and our former life loses its bitter

memories, and tempts us by contrast with the present. We set out on our Christian pilgrimage with a resolution and enthusiasm that promise to bear us triumphantly through, but we find that, as we advance, our spirits flag till we well-nigh lose heart altogether.

Is your heart thus tried? Does your faith thus stagger? Let me invite you to the remedy God has provided. The secret of a calm and contented life—a life that will rise superior to all that can happen to you, and keep your heart in perfect peace—is found in his unfailing promises. There is not a leaf of the Bible but has some, so that you cannot fail to find what will suit you. Does your spirit faint? They are a dropping honeycomb, better than Jonathan's. Dip your pilgrim staff into their richness, and put your hand to your mouth, like him, and your faintness will pass away. Are you thirsty? They are the flowing stream of the water of life, of which you may drink by the way, and lift up the head. Are you overcome by the sultry burden of the day? They are as the shadow of a cloud to bring down the heat; as the cool shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Have your steps well-nigh slipped?



They are a staff in your hand, on the top of which, betimes, like Jacob, you may lean, and worship God. Are you sad? There are no such songs to beguile the road, and to bear you on with gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe, to come into the mountain of the Lord. Put but a promise under your head by night, and, were your pillow a stone, like that at Bethel, you shall have Jacob's vision. Realise but one of all the comfortable words that God has spoken to believers, and the thirstiest wilderness will become an Elim, with palm-trees and wells of water. He needs never be sad who keeps the promises in mind. They are the word of Him who cannot lie; the title to the saints' inheritance; its earnest and pledge, confirmed by God's own seal. You need never have a cloud on your joy, for they brighten every foot of your way, and their light never falls so sweetly as on the eyes of the dying, who look to their Saviour as they pass away.

Let this be your prayer:—

My Father, who art in heaven, whose are the everlasting covenant, and the sure mercies of David, who keepest Thy truth for ever,—as

Thou hast condescended to grant me the rich promises of Thy word; bestow on me the needful grace to embrace, cherish, and humbly appropriate them, day by day, to Thy glory and the good of my undying soul, through Jesus • Christ, our Lord. Amén.

### TO MYSELF.

LET nothing make thee sad or fretful,  
Or too regretful,  
Be still;  
What God hath ordered must be right,  
Then find in it thine own delight,  
My will.

Why should'st thou fill to-day with sorrow  
About to-morrow,  
My heart?  
ONE watches all, with care most true,  
Doubt not that He will give thee too,  
Thy part.

Only be steadfast, never waver,  
Nor seek earth's favour,  
But rest:  
Thou knowest what God's will must be  
For all his creatures—so, for thee—  
The best.

PAUL FLEMMING. 1609—1640.

## II.

### The Design of the Promises.

Give to the winds thy fears ;  
    Hope, and be undismayed ;  
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears ;  
    God shall lift up thy head.  
Through waves, through clouds, through storms,  
    He gently clears thy way.  
Wait thou his time ; so shall the night  
    Soon end in joyous day.

He everywhere hath sway,  
    And all things serve his might.  
His every act pure blessing is,  
    His path unsullied light.  
When He makes bare his arm,  
    What shall his work withstand ?  
When He his people's cause defends,  
    Who, who shall stay his hand ?

Leave to his sovereign will  
    To choose and to command ;  
With wonder filled thou then shalt own  
    How wise, how strong his hand.  
Thou comprehend'st Him not ;  
    Yet earth and heaven tell,  
God sits as sovereign on his throne,  
    He ruleth all things well.

Thou seest our weakness, Lord ;  
    Our hearts are known to Thee ;  
O lift Thou up the sinking hand ;  
    Confirm the feeble knee.  
Let us, in life and death,  
    Boldly Thy truth declare ;  
And publish, with our latest breath,  
    Thy love and guardian care.

GERHARDT. 1606—1676.

## II.

### THE DESIGN OF THE PROMISES.

**I**F we look out on some fair garden in the height of June, the glory of the varied flowers, and the mingled sweetness of their odours may well delight us; but if we would enjoy the fulness of the beauties before us, and the fragrant delicacy of their perfume, we must go to each bed and border, and bend lovingly over it. So with the promises; to look at them as a whole, as they bloom all over the garden of God's word, may well ravish our senses; but to know their full richness, we need to look at them in detail, more closely.

The great end of all the good things which the Lord has spoken concerning us is that, for the joy that is set before us, we may live in this world as not of it, and confess that we are pilgrims and strangers that seek a city. We

would know nothing of God's gracious purposes towards us but for the promises, for it is from them alone we learn what He has prepared for those that love Him. As the flowers gather for us the otherwise hidden sweetness of earth and air, they draw to themselves and give forth for our joy the otherwise undiscovered delights of God's good-will to his people. They are the ground on which our faith rests; its source and support. We should have nothing to believe if they were withdrawn. To wake our hope and expectation, as well as to stay and strengthen us in the troubles of life, He has been pleased, in them, to draw back the veil from eternity, and let us have glimpses of the inheritance of the saints in light. He might have kept his love a secret in his own bosom, to surprise us the more when made known. Men often hide their kindest intentions till their fulfilment, and not seldom wisely, for expectations from friends, at times work as much evil as good. But God is so infinitely above us, and so wholly beyond our unworthy schemings and jealousies, that He needs no reserve, and is free to make what revelation of his purposes He thinks fit, without endangering

his own glory or our highest good, and thus to cheer and bless his creatures by letting them know how great the love is He feels towards them, and that they may count on Him as their Almighty Friend, in all their manifold trials and temptations.

His loving-kindness, thus disclosed, embraces both the present and the future; the life that is now and that which is to come. The great bending blue sky of the promises stretches over all our days, from the cradle to the grave. Helpless infancy is not without assured protection, and old age finds the everlasting arm underneath it, to prop its failing strength. All the changes of life; all its cares and anxieties, find words to soothe, encourage, and direct. Poverty or wealth, wisdom or simplicity, sickness or health, have all their needed help from this rich treasury. The friendless, the wanderer, the bereaved, the tired, can all alike draw joy from these wells of salvation. God scatters blessings all along our path, to lighten our journey. In the Psalms alone, what wealth of comfort and support shines out from countless passages! What a history would those songs of Zion give, could it be written, of hearts



cheered, tears dried up, faith strengthened, hope kindled, darkness turned to light, through the three thousand years since the first of them were sung! There is not one of them that has not a wondrous story of its varied uses, by men of every rank, in all conceivable conditions and trials of human life. And the other books of Scripture have their share of kindly words to lighten whatever makes life a burden. Our daily course, from first to last, is skirted with fair borders of promises that are green and blossoming when all around is bare.

To make his favours meet every want, God has not only cheered us by assurances of good to be conferred, but, what is as essential, has promised to remove the evils that oppress us. It would be only a partial benefit to grant a blessing, if hindrances to its enjoyments were left to fret us, and hence, both gifts and deliverance are equally vouchsafed us. The Lord God is both a sun and shield; a sun to give us life and light; a shield to guard us from all danger. Heaven is not only a fulness of pleasure, it is to see all tears wiped from off all faces, and death itself swallowed up in victory. Tears that might dim its joys; death that might

interrupt their perpetuity, and all else that might disturb their sweetness, are to be utterly removed and done away with by the hand of God himself.

For the life to come, the promises are rich with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. For outward honour and dignity, there are white robes and crowns; for everlasting and unclouded joy, there is stainless holiness, and the vision of the Holy One, and the clear-flowing river of life, amidst an eternal summer. There is light for the intellect, love for the heart, and immortal vigour for every faculty, and to shut out for ever all that would endanger the perpetual bliss of these glorious regions to which we shall be translated, there is nothing that abates our happiness here but will there be met and made up by its opposite. Reverse whatever gives tears or care on earth, and you have what is promised in heaven.

It infinitely enhances the value of these assurances that they are freely offered to all who will but accept them, although the nature of many of them, as designed for hearts which sigh for spiritual more than for temporal blessings, limits the number who prize them as they

should. Where there is no love of God there can be no joy in the promise of his presence in the soul : where a holy heaven has no attractions, nothing said of it can be much valued. Those who think themselves well think little of the physician ; those who think themselves just must underrate the offers of pardon, and those whose hearts are set on the present must be indifferent to what is so wholly dissimilar, above. The great purpose of God in the Bible is to lead us to a pure and holy life while here, in preparation for our being presented before the presence of his glory hereafter, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. All his promises have this in view. If they speak of temporal benefit, it is in subordination to a healthful discipline which shall tone and brace the soul to set its deeper affections rather on things above. They care nothing for the present apart from the future, but blend the two, that, by beginning the life of heaven upon earth, we may be able to enter on it fully when we come to die. The true enjoyment of the promises thus implies a religious taste. They are the very bread of life to lowly souls, but to them alone. The believer knows no

words in which to tell their value, but to others they are empty sounds.

These blessed messages from God must be pondered singly if we would realise their richness as we should. The colours on the artist's palette make no show, but when they are spread on the canvas we see their beauty. You need to look from every point, and must repeat your study day by day to learn all the charms of some sweet landscape. So much shows itself to-day, and to-morrow adds new features of its own, till, little by little, we come to apprehend the beauty of the whole. And if in nature it be thus, much more in the visions of the things that God has prepared for them that love Him, which reveal fresh wonders of divine love the longer we dwell on them. The saint's inheritance is too great to be realised by any general survey. We must explore it day by day, in new directions, and each day will show new delights, and wake new thanks to Him who gives us all. Single out promises as they suit your present case; press their heavenly ripeness into your cup, and praise the Most High who has given such divine joy from a single cluster of the vintage of his Word.

## PRAYER.

O LORD God of Hosts, who dwellest in the heavens, seated in essential and eternal felicities; fill our hearts with desires and longings to enter into those courts where Thou sittest, attended with the beauteous orders of angels, and millions of beatified spirits; and that our desires may receive infinite satisfaction, give us Thy help, that we going through the vale of misery, the pools may be filled with water, our hearts and eyes may run over with tears of repentance, and overflow with sorrow and contrition for our sins; that we, living a godly life, going from strength to strength, from virtue to virtue, at last may appear in Sion unto the God of gods, beholding the face of Thine Anointed, Thy Christ and our Jesus, and may dwell one day in Thy courts, even all the long day of eternity; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

### III.

## **The Fountain of Immortality.**

THOU, Lord, art Love, and everywhere  
Thy name is brightly shown ;  
Beneath, on earth,—Thy footstool fair ;  
Above, in heaven,—Thy throne.

Thy word is Love—in lines of gold  
There mercy prints its trace ;  
In nature we Thy steps behold,  
The gospel shows Thy face.

Thy ways are Love—though they transcend  
Our feeble range of sight,  
They wind through darkness to their end  
In everlasting light.

Thy thoughts are love, and Jesus is  
The loving voice they find ;  
His love lights up the dark abyss  
Of the eternal mind.

Thy chastisements are Love—more deep  
They stamp the seal divine ;  
And by a sweet compulsion keep  
Our spirits nearer Thine.

Thy heaven is the abode of Love !  
O blessed Lord, that we  
May there, when time's dim shades remove,  
Be gathered home to Thee !

There with Thy resting saints to fall,  
Adoring, round Thy throne ;  
Where all shall love Thee, Lord, and all  
Shall in Thy love be one.

J. D. BURNS.

### III.

#### THE FOUNTAIN OF IMMORTALITY.

**H**AD the sun, which gives us all the light and joy of life, been veiled in perpetual vapours, permitting so much of his brightness to reach us, but hiding the source from which it came, how deep and universal would have been the desire to pierce beyond, and discover what could be known of that fountain whose abated glory was so great? And shall we not much rather seek to trace the beams of the heavenly sun up to their source, so far as it is possible, that we may know what is permitted of that uncreated light which sheds on our souls the golden rays of the promises?

The gracious giver of all these words of hope and comfort, is our Father in heaven. He is "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift." It is He who "giveth good gifts to them that ask Him."



They are given to us by "his own glory and virtue." They are "the promises of God." His whole nature consents and acts together in these "great and precious" favours—his "glory" as the all-wise, all-powerful, all-knowing, and eternal: his "virtue" as the all-holy and all-loving. His attributes blend their varied beams into the soft white light of mercy.

It is well to remember this, that we may give God the glory due to his name. We are apt to think of Him only as a judge, and to forget that He is a loving Father; an error, than which none could be more hurtful to our souls, for our whole spiritual life must catch its tone from our conception of God. Unworthy thoughts of Him react upon ourselves. Fill the throne of heaven with one whose heart yearns after all his children; whose brow is never clouded with anger; whose eyes look down on us with the calm light of an infinite solicitude; whose lips part only to invite us, in a still small voice, to "look unto Him and be saved"—and we are drawn irresistibly to Him. The day may and will come when awful words of doom will be uttered by Him; but it will be only when, at last, He cannot help it, that He will speak

terrible things in righteousness against any of the creatures He has made. In the day of salvation now shining from around Him, He is that wondrous God who "so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but might have everlasting life." Mere power, or justice, or even holiness, have no such attractions as the name of father and the thought of love. The beauty of holiness fills the heart of the saint, but the invitations of divine compassion win the sinner. No wonder, then, that we are wooed, all through the Scriptures, by the disclosure of the tenderest human sympathies as filling the bosom of God. No earthly parent could plead more earnestly with his erring child than He who made us pleads with the transgressor: no human lips ever followed the wanderer with more tender expostulations: no human heart ever sighed so audibly, or loved so long, as the heart of the Eternal. Have a care, then, of your thought of God. Remember, as you read or ponder, that all the promises are but the breathings of his unspeakable love and pity, that beneath the robes of the King of Heaven, there dwell the sensibilities of a boundless compassion.

But if the promises are the gift of God, they come to us through the Son. They are all "in Him." We are "partakers" of them "in Christ." He has ascended up on high, and received gifts for men—even for the rebellious. The pardon of our sins came through his death. God forgives us for his sake. "In Him we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." That highest of all the divine gifts—that to which all others are but the ascending steps—the restoration of our sonship in the family of God, is from Him. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The gift of the Spirit is through Him. It was He who "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," and "sent" Him to us. We owe to Him all the blessedness of the world to come. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." He is the "Author and Finisher of our Faith." "We are reconciled to God by his death." "Of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things." In all times of your rejoicing, while you adore the

Father, do not forget our dear Lord and Saviour, his only Son, but make St. Paul's words your own,—“Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

With the Father and the Son, the blessed Spirit joins to convey and minister to us the gifts of heavenly mercy. It is He by whom we are born again, and it is his grace that quickens the divine life in our souls till it ripen to glory. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” By Him we are “led into all truth;” by Him we “bring forth fruit meet for repentance;” for Him we “are to ask, and seek, and knock;” by Him we “are changed into the image of Christ, from glory to glory.”

Thus, then, the ever-blessed Godhead are one in the gracious gifts of the promises. They come to us from God the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. The Father has prepared the many mansions: the way to them has been opened by the Son, and we are sustained and guided in it by the Spirit. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,” are the glorious companionship vouchsafed to every

soul that enters through the gates into the city.

Coming from God, the promises thus lead back to Him again, as the clouds that rise from the ocean find their way back to it, by rivers and brooks, when they have watered the earth. From God, by God, to God, is the law of the divine life. So, it circles from heaven to earth, and back again to heaven. It comes from Him, it is maintained by Him, and it leads to Him. Natural life, sprung from the dust, ere long returns to its source ; but the higher life of the spirit, born from above, rises to the blessed abodes from which it was sent forth.

### PRAYER.

O BLESSED Lord God, whose words are light and life to the obedient and believing soul, let Thy grace so purify my heart and actions, that I may be undefiled in Thy way, keeping Thy testimonies, and seeking Thee with my whole heart ; that my ways being made straight, and my feet kept from wandering, I may at last reach the land of eternal and glorious promises, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

IV.

'Tis Mercy Free.

I HEARD the voice of Jesus say,  
"Come unto me and rest ;  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast."  
I came to Jesus as I was—  
Weary, and worn, and sad ;  
I found in Him a resting-place,  
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Behold, I freely give  
The living water—thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live."  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream ;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"I am this dark world's Light ;  
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,  
And all the day be bright."  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
In Him my star, my sun ;  
And in that light of life I'll walk,  
Till travelling days are done.

H. BONAR.

#### IV.

##### 'TIS MERCY FREE.

ON what footing do we hold the promises? Are they the return for just claims? Are they granted only for a time? Or are they freely given, never to be recalled; given of favour, not for any merit?

The answer waits us in the words of St. Peter, "He hath *given* us exceeding great and precious promises." "*Given*," not *lent*. They are gifts, not wages; earnest of grace, not payment of debt; words of love, not rewards of services. A king gives, he does not sell. Look at Christ's promises to the Seven Churches. He gives to eat of the tree of life. He gives the crown of life and the hidden manna, and the white stone, and the new name. And, to sum up all, He adds, as Revelation closes, "Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life *freely*." We are to *take*, not buy, from



the rich stores of our Father's bounty. There was no obligation on Him to grant us any of his favours, and though He has given us many, it would have been no wrong if He had withheld all. They are the gracious fruits of a love as free as it is full. As to any claim on our part, the less we think of that the better. Surely we receive enough in the common blessings of life, and in our life itself, to make us debtors, were there nothing more. Do we think to get heaven for our duties done? Alas, even had we never failed we should have been unprofitable servants, for nature itself demands that we should honour God by constant faithfulness, as creatures of his hand. But who can boast that he has been faithful? Paul, whom all of us esteem a saint, had nothing better to say for himself than that he was the chief of sinners; and if he felt thus, shall we begin to talk of merit? Be honest with yourself; think over your past life; read your day's thoughts, and then try if you can look up and meet the eyes of God, as rightly claiming any portion in the promises? Merit is a word just enough from man to man; but to use it towards God is the best proof that we do not possess it. The publican's

prayer is the only one that the heart that knows itself can utter. If we are ever to get, it must be because God is merciful to the unworthy. Everything we receive from Him is unmerited, free, bounty. He "*grants* repentance." Faith is a "*gift*." He "*gives* rest to his people." He "*giveth* to all men liberally." "He *gave* his only-begotten Son." The wine and milk of all the promises are ours, without money and without price. God forbid that we should glory. Get this thought into your heart, as the first pre-requisite to an interest in God's special bounties. Never forget that they are his sovereign favours to the undeserving, coming from his gracious will, like the wealth of the dropping clouds, or the light of day, or the soft breathing of summer air.

*Given, not lent!* Their very nature precludes that, for they reach on in their fulness through eternity. He who gives them is without variableness or shadow of turning—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Father of lights knows no waxing or waning of his purposes; no eclipses, no withdrawal of their shining. His gifts and callings are without repentance. Fixed before the foundation

of the world, they are still the "sure mercies of David" and the "everlasting covenant." Man often promises only to disappoint; often changes in his affections and will, and makes us feel that we have leaned upon a broken reed,—but there is no ebb and flow in the heart or mind of the Eternal. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but his kindness shall not depart from his people, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed." He still whispers to the soul, as He did to his servant of old, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," "with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."

*Given*, with every pledge and binding form, to put the gift beyond a question, and to show that it is for ever. It is amazing how God condescends to human fears and weakness, and helps our trust in Him by multiplied securities. We think a gift is surely ours if settled on us as the acknowledged heirs, and God has met our thoughts and modes, by setting forth the promises as the inheritance of all believers. He has done more, for an inheritance requires a title, and He has deigned to speak of his good-will to us as a "covenant"—or binding

agreement—made out in our behalf, giving us as our own all that He has promised. We are wont to think of our fellow-men—that a pledge or promise unrecorded, or, even if recorded, if not confirmed by repetition in some other way, needs a guarantee and attestation, and He has even thought of this, and has confirmed his covenant by an oath.\* “Willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, He has confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” Gracious condescension could surely go no farther!

*Given*, equally, with royal fulness, to all believers. Not to a happy few among them; the elder sons, or favourites, of his great family, but to all, alike, with an impartial hand, as they have shown themselves fitted to receive.

The water of life is free to all; the hope of heaven; the clean heart and the right spirit; the gift of his Son; the white robes and the crown of righteousness—all the exceeding and

\* Heb. vi. 17.

eternal weight of glory laid up for them that fear Him,—are for every one who will but make them his. There is not, in all the Bible, a single promise that the poorest or the vilest may not plead as spoken to himself, if he only come aright. To him who is contented to receive without deserving; to feel that he can never recompense such love; to lay his pride and self-sufficiency at the feet of Christ, and to approach with lowly child-like spirit, all the treasures of eternal love are a free and everlasting gift.

#### PRAYER.

GRANT, O Lord, that our affections and endeavours be not divided between Thee and the world, but that we may seek Thee with our whole heart, cleansing our ways from all impurity, giving to Thy service our youth and more perfect age, even all our days, and all our powers, taking more delight in the way of Thy testimonies than in all manner of riches and fading pleasures; that we, delighting in Thee, and in the ways that lead to Thee, may be beloved of Thee with an eternal love; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

V.

Exceeding Riches.

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JERUSALEM, the golden,  
With milk and honey bless'd ;  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed :  
The home of fadeless splendour,  
Of flowers that have no thorn ;  
Where they shall dwell as children  
Who here as exiles mourn.

Jerusalem, the only,  
That look'st from heaven below ;  
In thee is all my glory :  
In me is all my woe :  
I strive to win that glory ;  
I toil to gain that light ;  
Send hope before to grasp it,  
Till hope is lost in sight.

Jerusalem ! exulting,  
On that securest shore,  
I hope thee, wish thee, sing thee,  
And love thee, evermore !  
O happy, holy city,  
The portion of the blest ;  
True vision of true beauty,  
Sweet balm of all distress'd.

Thou hast no shore, fair ocean !  
Thou hast no time, bright day !  
Dear fountain of refreshment  
To pilgrims far away !  
Upon the Rock of Ages  
They raise thy holy tower ;  
Thine is the victor's laurel,  
And thine the golden dower.

The Lamb is all thy splendour,  
The Crucified thy praise ;  
His laud and benediction  
Thy ransomed people raise.  
And He whom now we trust in  
Shall then be seen and known ;  
And they that know and see Him  
Shall have Him for their own.

O sweet and blessed country,  
When shall I see thy face ?  
O sweet and blessed country,  
When shall I win thy grace ?  
Exult, O dust and ashes !  
The Lord shall be thy part ;  
His only, His for ever  
Thou shalt be, and thou art.

## V.

### EXCEEDING RICHES.

THE tree of life in Eden was guarded by Cherubim, with flaming sword, but the richer fruits of the promises stand free to every believer. Blessed is the man who puts forth his hand, and eats, and lives for ever ! Every emblem of heavenly joys may justly be applied to them. I might liken them to the crystal stream of the water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, whose flow is ever at the full to refresh the thirsty, to restore the weary, and to cheer and revive the dejected and drooping. I might speak of them as the warm and enlivening rays of the Sun of Righteousness, which make a blessed summer in the soul. How happy he who has a right to them as a tree of life, for good, with fruits ever new and ever fair ; and as a clear and flowing stream, like that which makes glad the City of God—for his



solace and delight, or to think of them and enjoy them as the bright sunshine of eternal love!

The glory of the saint's inheritance in the promises may well detain us. St. Peter speaks of them as exceeding great and precious, and St. Paul dwells upon them with unwearying rapture in all his Epistles. It will be well for us to stay awhile looking over this land of Beulah.

The promises are great and precious in *their Author*. They must be so, for they are the gifts of the King of Glory. Our gifts are proportioned to our means and standing. The child can only offer a flower; for it is only a child, and has no greater wealth. The peasant can bring no more than some rustic trifle, whose value lies in the feeling it shows, not in itself. The wealthy merchant, surrounded with luxury, gives in keeping with his rank, for, as he lives in affluence, it would ill beseem him to dishonour himself by a paltry gift. The great noble, living in splendour, with wide possessions, and a lordly retinue, has a standard of his own to which his gifts must conform, and may well outvie those who can boast no such estate. But the mighty mon-

arch, whose abode is in palaces, and whose grandeur is swelled by the wealth of an empire, is high above all his subjects, and when he wishes to show his favour must measure his gift by his kingly greatness. What, then, must be the scale on which He bestows bounty who is the King of Kings, the Creator, and Almighty Ruler, of earth and heaven? We see in nature how He does when He sets forth his glory. Look abroad on the heavens, or round on this wondrous world, and think of his majesty, and then say what must be the royal gifts of one so high over all! As is the great giver so must be the gift. No wonder we are told that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and that it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him. We see in the wide and varied loveliness spread around us in nature what satisfies the thought of his heart when He makes a world; we see by the spectacle of the nightly skies with their countless systems, reaching through heaven beyond heaven, on what scale He works when He seeks to make known his full glory, and we may feel sure that He will always act

in harmony with his own greatness, and that we may think of what He has yet to do by what He has done. If so, what of the glory laid up in the promises !

They must be very great and precious if we think of *the price at which they were won*. It could not be for little that God's only Son stooped to die. That which no less a sacrifice could procure must be in keeping with the amazing cost. Knowing the tender love of God to our race, and how He longed to receive us back to his home, it could be no common bounty that even He could not grant till his Well-Beloved had opened the way by his blood. The Apostle thanks God for the unspeakable gifts of the Saviour's dying love ; but that gift was the making the promises ours. To realise what they must mean, we cannot do better than turn to the cross. They first shone out in their noonday glory when darkness covered all the land.

Promises derive their worth from the *truth of Him by whom they are made*. Too many among men are given only to be broken, and mock the heart that has trusted them. Withered hopes are as common as withered

leaves, and tell of faith vainly confident for a time, but passing, ere long, into bitterness and regret. To be able to rely on any one's word is all that gives his promise its worth, but if we can do so with certainty his word becomes as much worth as the performance. In all the relations of life, trust is the bond of society—trust in men's speech, trust in men's covenants. Distrust breaks up all inter-relations of private or social or public life. But what trust can we repose in the best of men compared to that which is rightly felt towards the God of truth? It is written of Him that He is ever mindful of his covenant, and that his truth endureth to all generations. His people of old could justly say that not even one had failed of all the good things that He had promised concerning them, and He is always the same. He keepeth truth for ever, and there is no unfaithfulness in Him. We think ourselves happy if we have the assurance of benefit from a fellow-man on whom we rely, and dismiss our cares and anxieties in the confidence that our hopes will be justified; but what security should the believer feel who has the written word of the Holy God?

Wherever, in all the changes and varied fears and troubles of life, a promise meets his case, has he not a stay on which he can rest calm and secure; a hope that should brighten his way however dark? When he thinks of the inconceivable greatness of what God has declared as the portion of those who trust in his name, and remembers that if He has spoken He will surely do it, should not his heart rest in perfect peace? The worth of the promises gathers an additional glory when we keep in mind that heaven and earth may pass away, but not one word of our heavenly Father will fail till all be fulfilled.

#### PRAYER.

O LORD, Thy mercy is great, Thy word is true from everlasting, and in the truth of Thy word, and in the mercies of Thy promises and loving-kindness, Thou lovest to be known to the sons of men. Teach us, we beseech Thee, to trust in Thee at all times. Keep us from faint-hearted and sinful doubting, and in all seasons of our lives may we have perfect peace because our minds are stayed on Thee. Grant this, we pray Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

VI.

**The Blessed God.**

has come, and we have to weep in helpless sorrow. The will is there, but our power is weakness.

If it were so with God, all his promises would only show his love, but would be of no practical avail. If we knew beforehand that they were thus idle, they would be left unnoticed, as no more than feeble good wishes : if we discovered it only in our hour of need, how bitterly would the disappointment add to our pain !

But "He is great, and his name is great in might."

" His every word of grace is strong  
As that which built the skies,  
The power that rolls the stars along  
Spoke all the promises."

His word accomplishes that which He pleases. "He will work, and who will let it?" "There is nothing too hard for Him," for "His is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the victory and the majesty ; for all that is in heaven and earth is his, and He is exalted as head above all." "Riches and honour come of Him, and He reigns over all, and in His hand are power and might, and in His hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all."

“He is the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.” He has a mighty arm; strong is his hand, high is his right hand.” “He is the mighty God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.” “Trust ye, then, in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” “If He be for you, who can be against you?” Make the words of the Psalmist your own,—“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for He is with me.”

“Trust in the Lord, for ever trust,  
And banish all your fears,  
Strength in the Lord Jehovah dwells,  
Eternal as his years.”

It is almost as fatal a calamity to want the *wisdom* to give for the best, as to want the power to give at all. Mistimed or inappropriate gifts are often as disappointing as the want of them. It is of no use to give me that in one kind of trouble which is only fit for another. The cordial must suit the complaint;



the counsel, the case. The end of the promises is to train us in meetness for heaven, but the heart is wayward, and swayed by a thousand influences, and to be led at all only by loving wisdom. The greatest bounties—present or future—might hurt rather than benefit, if given at the dictate of fond, unthinking power. Thank God, there is no fear of this in the distribution of the favours He offers. “He is wise in heart” as well as “mighty in strength.” “He is wonderful in counsel.” He is “the only wise God.” The higher the intellect, the wider the experience, of saints and angels, the more the wonder felt at “the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge.” Who can fear that his wants will be misunderstood, or the help required be unknown, or given in a hurtful way? A wise father knows better than his child when and how to aid him: how much more may we trust the wisdom of the Father of our spirits! It will be well for us, if we can rely on a care so much above our own; which sees the end from the beginning, and can make all things work together for our good, when they seem most against us.

With such a source to which to look in all

times of trouble, the heart can have no misgivings. Man may err : God cannot. He has heaven and earth at his command, and He knows what we have need of before we ask Him. We see only a little way before us, but all things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do. Our prejudices, weaknesses, self-deceptions, and ignorance, often prompt us to steps hurtful in many ways ; but He sits above the confusions and distractions of earth, with all things open to his divine survey, and from his calm eternity can order them as is best. If left to ourselves, how often should we miss our way ! how often follow appearances, and wreck our highest interests ! We need the cloudy pillar all through our journey, and in the promises we have it assured us ; for they are the mystic presence of God, to cheer us in our pilgrimage, and guide us by the only safe course to the better Canaan. Where the cloud rests, let us willingly abide : whither it guides, let us ever follow. Whatever difficulties be in our way, let us still trust Him who has led us thus far. Where we see no way, He sees it for us. Let us rest in the Lord, and make Him our confidence. He can bring water from the flinty

rock, and spread a table in the wilderness; He can cleave the rivers for us, can make even our enemies to be at peace with us, can give light in darkness, can deliver us from all evil, and bring us safely to our journey's end. With infinite power to perform his good pleasure, and infinite wisdom to guide him in all He does, what estate is so blessed as that of him who is the object of his guardian care?

“ At anchor laid, remote from home,  
Toiling I cry, ‘ Sweet Spirit, come  
Celestial breeze, no longer stay,  
But swell my sails, and speed my way.’ ”

VII.

**Clouds that Drop Fatness.**

THY ceaseless, unexhausted love,  
Unmerited and free,  
Delights our evil to remove,  
And help our misery.

Thou waitest to be gracious still :  
Thou dost with sinners bear ;  
That, saved, we may Thy goodness feel,  
And all Thy grace declare.

Thy goodness and Thy truth, to me,  
To every soul, abound :  
A vast unfathomable sea,  
Where all our thoughts are drowned.

Its streams the whole creation reach,  
So plenteous is the store ;  
Enough for all, enough for each,  
Enough for evermore.

Faithful, O Lord, Thy mercies are,  
A rock that cannot move :  
A thousand promises declare  
Thy constancy of love.

Throughout the universe it reigns,  
Unalterably sure ;  
And while the truth of God remains,  
His goodness must endure.

C. WESLEY.

## VII.

### CLOUDS THAT DROP FATNESS.

ALL that human love can do is little at the best. *Our* promises, however trustworthy, tender, or judicious, can meet but few needs ; can go but a little way to satisfy the unnumbered and wide-reaching cravings of our nature. They may supply temporal wants, lighten cares, and throw a surface brightness on the heaving tides of feeling, but the depths lie dark and cold after we have done all. But the promises of God are exceeding great and precious *in their boundless diversity and range.*

As the sky bends over sea and land, mountain and valley, fruitful field and barren waste, round the whole world, so bends the soft blue of the promises over all the varied landscape of our life. There are words of counsel and comfort for every age, for all estates, for every change and vicissitude that can befall us—words


for the time of our strength and action—for days of hope and ardour—for seasons of joy and pleasure, and words for the weary days of sickness and adversity, of loneliness and grief. From the cradle to the grave the voice of guidance and consolation steals perpetually, like soft music, on the ear that listens to it and seeks it. And, as with this life, so with that which is to come. The hope of glory, and the helps to reach it, are granted with as rich a bounty. The Light from Beyond cheers the present, and illumines the world from which it comes.

When the soul is sad and desponding, and all other comforts are nipped and withered, they blossom like winter roses, fair and fragrant, in the leafless bareness of all else. They revive the heart in times of trouble, as the rain brightens and quickens the mown grass. They are like the soft shower on the dusty hedge, to take away all the soil of our cares. They are springs in the desert, that never fail, and keep all around them green. In our sorest trials they are the anchor of the soul that keep it safe, and let it outride the storm. In the calm and serene days of peace, they are com-

panion angels, to escort us on our journey and beguile the way. They are the strong man's meat, the sick man's cordial, the condemned sinner's pardon, and the saint's evidence. Human help can only aid us in special and limited directions. All the wealth in the world could not heal a broken heart, nor buy peace of conscience, nor calm anxiety, nor remove our cares. Honour does not bring happiness; learning, or rank, or fame, are equally vain to gladden the sorrowful; for the great often envy the sunny joy of the lowly; the student would give half his learning to win back the health he has lost over his books; a crown is only a glittering bauble, of which he thinks least who wears it, and fame is only a passing breath, won often by those who do not deserve it. But the promises of God meet all our needs, for He is "the God of all comfort." The ancient king, on his throne in Jerusalem, reigning, far and wide, over a prosperous empire, might seem to have had all that the heart could wish. But he found that his crown was lined with cares, and that his golden sceptre could not charm away the weary thoughts of his bosom, nor the pomp and luxury of his court



keep his soul from being cast down and disquieted. He turned away from the whole to say to his God—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." Nothing short of the promises could give him peace of mind, or satisfy the longings of his heart. To have no care for the future is the one idea in which we are readiest to sum up what is needed to unbend the brow and chase away brooding care. But this the Christian has, beyond all men else, if he avail himself of the promises. Whatever burden may press, he can "cast it on the Lord." He can "cast all his cares on Him, for He careth for us." In all dangers he may lie down in peace, remembering that "He that keepeth Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps." If he come to poverty, or have always borne it, he knows that the righteous will never be forsaken, and that He who cares for the birds of the air will not forget his servant. If troubles press, he bears them calmly, in the assured belief that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for him an exceeding and eternal "weight of glory," if they be rightly improved. Days of languishing bring no gloom, for "the Lord



makes all his bed in his sickness." When the clouds return after the rain, God is his strong habitation, to which he may continually resort. He looks down on the waves that are like to overwhelm him, from the high rock of his heavenly hope. He is kept in perfect peace, for his mind is stayed on God. As the night shows more of the glories over us than the day, his darkest hours have visions of brighter worlds than this, which till then lay veiled in the light of prosperity.

All that life can give is, at the best, only outward, but it is in the glory of the promises that they reach to the deepest wants of the heart. We may be lonely and miserable when we seem most to be envied, if we have nothing more than the present affords; but he who falls back on the support of God's covenant engagements has a peace that the world can neither give nor take from him. A few words from the Scriptures have sovereign virtue to raise us above all repining or sadness. How can he be cast down or dismayed to whom the voice of God keeps ever repeating—"Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help

thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness?"\* Single texts shine out before the soul in its hours of darkness, like a light to the belated traveller. The lonely widow, the helpless sick, the pining exile, the friendless poor, the feeble old, the fainting and dying, lift up their eyes and forget their misery when they think how their God has said—"Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."† How blessed the saint who thus, in whatever state he may be, has a divine secret that keeps him always heart-whole, and fills him with a joy that is unspeakable and a hope full of glory! Mary's Magnificat is his, for his soul magnifies the Lord, and his spirit rejoices in God his Saviour, for He that is mighty hath done to him great things, and holy is his name.

Reader, can you thus rest your soul on God?

\* Isaiah xli. 10.

† Ib. xliii. 2.

PRAYER.

O THOU that hearest prayer, to whom can I come but unto Thee? Thou hast said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee." Now, Lord, I come. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, and grant me that I may put all my trust and confidence in Thee for ever. Make me perfect in every good work to do Thy will, working in me all that is well pleasing in Thy sight; give me grace to stay myself upon Thee, and keep me in that sweet peace Thou givest to Thine own. I ask it for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Now, thank we all, our God  
With hearts and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom his world rejoices;  
Who from our mothers' arms  
Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us,  
And keep us in his grace,  
And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills  
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God  
The Father, now be given,  
The Son, and Him who reigns  
With them in highest heaven—  
The One Eternal God,  
Whom earth and heaven adore;  
For thus it was, is now,  
And shall be evermore.

MARTIN RINKART. 1586—1649.

## VIII.

### **The Everlasting Covenant.**

"For ever with the Lord!"

Amen; so let it be;  
Life from the dead is in that word;  
'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,  
Absent from Him I roam,  
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent  
A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,  
Home of my soul, how near,  
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye  
Thy golden gates appear.  
Ah! then my spirit faints  
To reach the land I love,  
The bright inheritance of saints,  
Jerusalem above.

"For ever with the Lord!"  
Father, if 'tis Thy will,  
The promise of that faithful word  
Even here to me fulfil.  
Be Thou at my right hand,  
Then can I never fail;  
Uphold Thou me and I shall stand,  
Fight, and I must prevail.

So when my latest breath  
Shall rend the veil in twain,  
By death I shall escape from death,  
And life eternal gain.  
Knowing as I am known,  
How shall I love that word,  
And oft repeat before the Throne,  
"For ever with the Lord!"

The trump of final doom  
Will speak the self-same word,  
And heaven's voice thunder through the tomb,  
"For ever with the Lord!"  
The tomb shall echo deep  
That death-awakening sound,  
The saints shall hear it in their sleep,  
And answer from the ground.

Then upward as they fly,  
That resurrection word  
Shall be their shout of victory,  
"For ever with the Lord!"  
That resurrection word,  
That shout of victory,  
Once more, "For ever with the Lord!"  
Amen; so let it be!

J. MONTGOMERY.

## VIII.

### THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

THERE are fountains that flow only at intervals, filling their basins the one day, and leaving them dry the next. Picture, this, of the fluctuating worth of earthly hopes! Health, friends, youth, fortune, life itself, are but as waters that fail, and streams that are soon dried up—April showers, not steady brooks or rivers. Our expectations are built on sand and fall before the wind and the flood. We are subject to vanity. The young man thinks he will always be young, but his spring-time passes like a dream; the strong man trusts in his strength, but a fit of common sickness makes him as weak as his own child; we sit under our blossoming hopes to-day, to find that they are withered like Jonah's gourd to-morrow; we are surrounded by friends when we do not need them, but they are few when they might be of



66. *THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.*

service. Too many of them, like the birds, come and leave with the summer. Our fortune is ever fickle, for riches, like witches' gold, often turn to worthlessness when we think we have them most secure; and life itself is only a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Those who have lived in countries where earthquakes are common, tell us that no terror is like that of feeling the solid earth, which is our very standard of stability, rock under the feet. When the sea is tempestuous, men can think of the land as unmoved and safe, if it could only be reached; but when the land heaves like an ocean, there is nothing to which the thoughts can fly for contrast and comfort. Compared with others, we may think we stand on the shore, while they are tossed in the storm; but, before long, our own footing reels underneath us. In that hour there is only one refuge which cannot be moved—the sure mercies of God. They stand fast for ever. The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the kindness of God does not depart, nor is the covenant of his peace removed from us. His love is a full stream that flows for ever the

same, from an exhaustless source. He cares each day for the day's cares, leaving us to trust for the morrow, but never forsaking us. Sometimes our light may be faint, and our sun sink low; but it is only a northern night, and it presently returns to shine on us again. Who ever heard of a child of God being left to despair? He may be tried as fine gold is tried, but it is that he may be the purer. Sometimes there seems a veiling of God's face, but the clouds rise from the earth, and He is still there, though we cannot see Him till they pass. There are always some stars shining through rifts, when our hopes are darkest; always some green spots in the waste, when our lot seems most desolate. Whatever may be the case with the present life, there is never a fear of the life to come being safe in God's keeping.

Then, that life hereafter is so unspeakably glorious, and so different from this! It is everlasting, and as sweet as it is long. The trees in the midst of the city will never fade; the palms in the hands of the saints are the pledge of a final victory; the white robes will be for ever unstained; and the new Jerusalem is so wholly secure that its gates are open day and

night, because no enemy can ever come against it. In this unfailing and glorious permanence of all that is promised in heaven lie thoughts that may well bear us up till we reach it. Who can realise what is meant by such blessed words as that we "shall reign for ever and ever;" or that "the Lord will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory, and the days of our mourning be ended?" We are so accustomed to disappointment here; so accustomed to see all we love fade and die, when we love it most, that the thought of our utmost hopes being surpassed, and of our enjoying the society of those whom we love, for ever, seems too good to be possible.

But it is all true; true on the word of a God! Our past life is only a mist, with the wreck of old hopes shining through it; but our hopes will mock us no longer, in heaven, nor wet our cheeks with useless regrets. Martha and Mary will no more lament their Lazarus, laid in the grave, because their Friend was not there—for Death, the last enemy, will then, itself, be no more. Loving hearts will no more be parted; there will be no more sad farewells; no widowed hearts; no fatherless little ones. •

Blessed estate of the righteous dead ! Blessed reunion of spirits made perfect ! “ For ever and ever ” is the measure of heavenly joys. Eternal life ! Eternal glory ! These are the inheritance of the saints.

It adds infinitely to the value of God’s gifts, here and hereafter, that they are, in their chiefest bestowments, *spiritual*. The sweetest pleasures of sense cloy and pall. To have, is to cease to value. The trail of the serpent is over all the flowers of Eden that are left us. Even if in themselves they be pure, they are insufficient for our desires, and leave us unsatisfied when we have most of them. The rose has its thorn ; the light, its shadow ; human worth, its blemishes ; pleasure, its dull to-morrow ; riches, their cares. The fairest fruits have unsavoury kernels ; the clearest honey presently surfeits. Pleasures attained, like flowers plucked to enjoy them, are destroyed by the very making them ours. But the pleasures promised by God are pleasures for ever. True purity is its own heaven, and it is the same with all we shall have above. Our troubles here are only the black blossoms and fruit of evil. To be changed in our tastes and character so as

to become sinless and perfect, as we shall be in glory, will be to have an immortality of unclouded joy. Even here, he is the happy man whose conscience is easy and self-approving, but what is the worthiest life amongst men compared to that of the saints, when they have been presented before the presence of God's glory, faultless, with exceeding joy? To be holy, and unblamable, and irreprovable, in the sight of Him who tries the reins and searches the heart, and to whom all thoughts are open, means a holiness like that of the angels. In that transparent, spotless innocence of the redeemed, what joy, what safety, what ecstatic rapture dwell for ever! Souls thus robed in light can never have fear of their felicity passing away, for a fountain of joy is in their own breasts. They cannot die any more, for death is the growth of evil, and has nothing to lay hold of where there is no sin. Changed into the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, we shall be like Him in calm abiding blessedness, deep and unbroken for ever.

Such, then, are the promises : the gifts of our Father above ; gifts, not wages—free gifts of

sovereign grace, and full as free—full and free to all, alike, who make them theirs by faith in the Saviour; the gifts of a God who has all power in heaven and on earth, and who is as wise as mighty; gifts so great and precious that they came to us only at the cost of our Redeemer's blood; gifts suiting every need for time and eternity; gifts that satisfy the deepest cravings of the heart; gifts lasting as eternity, and glorious as that heaven where they will be enjoyed; gifts pure and holy as He who gives them;—how words fail to speak of them aright! Take the promises, O child of God, and plead them as your title to the inheritance, and they will be owned. They are your charter and covenant from God himself. May they be yours, reader, and mine!

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JESUS, priceless treasure,  
Source of purest pleasure,  
Truest friend to me!  
Long my heart hath panted,  
Till it well-nigh fainted,  
Thirsting after Thee!  
Thine I am, O Spotless Lamb;  
I will suffer nought to hide Thee,  
Ask for nought beside Thee.

In Thine arm I rest me,  
Foes who would molest me  
Cannot reach me here;

Though the earth be shaking,  
 Every heart be quaking,  
 Jesus calms my fear :  
 Sin and hell in conflict fell '  
 With their heaviest storms assail me,  
 Jesus will not fail me.

Satan, I defy thee ;  
 Death, I need not fly thee ;  
 Fear, I bid thee cease !  
 Rage, O world, thy noises  
 Cannot drown our voices,  
 Singing still of peace ;  
 For God's power guards every hour,  
 Earth and all the depths adore Him,  
 Silent bow before Him.

Wealth, I will not heed thee,  
 Wherefore should I need thee,  
 Jesus is my joy !  
 Honours, ye may glisten,  
 But I will not listen,  
 Ye the soul destroy !  
 Want, or loss, or shame, or cross,  
 Ne'er to leave my Lord shall move me  
 Since He deigns to love me.

Farewell, thou who choosest  
 Earth, and heaven refuseth,  
 Thou wilt tempt in vain ;  
 Farewell, sins, nor blind me,  
 Get ye far behind me,  
 Come not forth again ;  
 Past your hour, O pomp and power ;  
 Godless life, thy bonds I sever,  
 Farewell now for ever !

Hence, all thoughts of sadness,  
 For the Lord of gladness,  
 Jesus, enters in !  
 Those who love the Father,  
 Though the storms may gather,  
 Still have peace within :  
 Yea, whate'er I here must bear,  
 Still in Thee lies purest pleasure,  
 Jesus, priceless treasure !

JOHANN FRANK. 1618—1677.

IX.

We shall be like Him.



COME we that love the Lord,  
And let our joys be known ;  
Join in a song with sweet accord,  
And thus surround the throne.

The sorrows of the mind  
Be banished from this place :  
Religion never was designed  
To make our pleasures less.

Let those refuse to sing  
That never knew our God ;  
But children of the Heavenly King  
May speak their joys abroad.

The God that rules on high.  
And thunders when He please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky,  
And manages the seas—

This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our love ;  
He will send down his heavenly powers  
To carry us above.

There shall we see his face,  
And never, never sin ;  
There, from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasures in.

Yes, and before we rise  
To that immortal state,  
The thoughts of such amazing bliss  
Should constant joys create.

The men of grace have found  
Glory begun below ;  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground,  
From faith and hope may grow.

The hill of Zion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound,  
And every tear be dry ;  
We're marching through Immanuel's ground,  
To fairer worlds on high.

WATTS.

## IX.

### WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM.

THE high design of God in giving us the promises is stated by St. Peter to be, that we “might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, through lust.” It is not the gift of an outward and material glory, for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses, and even a place in heaven would be no heaven to him whose tastes and temper were not heavenly. The pure abodes of the redeemed are such as only saints can value, when they have been made meet for them by the work of the Spirit in their souls. It is impossible to know how far the Scriptures speak literally, in the language they use respecting the city above, or how far it is only an accommodation to human modes of thought. There may be crowns in heaven, and shining

robes, and palms, and harps of gold—no one can tell ; but this we do know, that it is not in these that the glorious felicity of the redeemed consists, for we might have them all, and yet be unhappy, because unholy ; and if they were all wanting we might yet have fulness of pleasures at God's right hand. Only innocence can, anywhere, be really blessed. Sin is the discord and anarchy of our nature ; innocence, the harmony of all our faculties. The one is war and tumult in the breast ; the other, perfect peace. Perfect felicity can only dwell in souls that are perfect.

To raise us to this divine ideal is the one end of God's dealings with us, and of the whole economy of salvation. For this, his Son was given ; for this, his Spirit strives with men ; and to exalt us to this is the grand purpose of all the promises. The corruption that is in the world, all the unholy influences on every side, are ever working on us to sink us to their level, blunting our sensibilities, degrading our desires, enfeebling our conscience, and in every way destroying our religious faculties. Our natural tendencies, until corrected by God's grace, have in them the seeds of moral death.

We give our lower nature sway. We are slaves to self-indulgence, and constantly seek it in paths which conscience tells us are forbidden. Corruption round us finds corruption in us, and each feeds the other till we fall to even lower levels in our spiritual life.

To lure us from all this is the design of the promises. The soul, feeling its degradation and misery; feeling that all its substance is being wasted, and that it has nothing but wretchedness in return, when it comes to itself, lifts up its eyes and sees afar, in the revelations of God's word, the home of its Heavenly Father. Sweet words come to it from promise after promise, offering it forgiveness and kindly welcome, and free restoration. The heart is wooed by all that is tender and lofty: higher ambitions, holy joys, ennobling motives, endearing sympathies, and needful helps. Feeling what the guilt of its past life has been—how it has poisoned the springs of true happiness, destroyed self-respect, kindled remorse, weakened and depraved the will, repressed every better impulse—it turns with a grateful but trembling emotion to lay hold on the hope set before it,

and resolves to arise and return to its Father, broken, contrite, subdued. The offers of free pardon, of loving re-admission to the family of God, of grace to help it in all its weakness, and lead it on, from step to step, till at last, in heaven, it become a "partaker of the divine nature"—changed into the image of God, from glory to glory, by the Holy Spirit—win it for ever.

That the aim of God's word is thus to secure an ever-advancing vigour and perfection of spiritual life, is the key to the sense in which we partake of God's nature. It is not that we become part of his essence or substance, as rain-drops merge in the ocean, or beams lose themselves in the sun, but that we attain a likeness of character to Him, by the impartation of his own grace. In the measure of our limited powers we can be holy as He is holy, and can reproduce the truth and love which have in Him their original fountain. As the wax takes the counterpart of the seal, the soul receives and retains the moral image of God. We become filled and transfigured by his brightness as the cloud, dark in itself, when filled with the light, is turned to stainless

whiteness; or as the planets, that have no light in themselves, borrow a shining glory from that of the sun.

In rousing the soul to seek this amazing bliss, the promises do not leave it to think that it is to sit passive, and merely yield itself to influences from without. He that has this hope in him purifieth himself, even as God is pure. He learns from the whole spirit of Scripture that we must be "workers together with God." The grace of God teaches him that, denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. There is no waiting for a magical change to be wrought without any action of our own. Life becomes an humble but earnest working out of salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is never forgotten that growth in grace is an earnest of future glory, and that the gates of heaven are on earth.

Faith and hope in God's promises are thus the spring of the Christian life, impelling it to seek to escape from all that is sinful, and to gain the image of God. The believer looks

afar into those distant regions where he is to dwell for ever, and daily seeks to come nearer and nearer them. He feels that he has only the foretaste here, and must wait for full enjoyment till he enter heaven—that the crown of life is above, and is only theirs who endure to the end.

### PRAYER.

O GOD, whose mercy reacheth unto the heavens, and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds, teach us to abhor all that is evil, and to set ourselves in every good way; that Thy fear being always before our eyes, and our trust being under the shadow of Thy wings, Thou mayest continue Thy loving-kindness to us all the days of our life; that at last we may be satisfied with the plenteousness of Thy house, and drink of the rivers of Thy pleasures, and in the light of Thy countenance see everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

X.

By Faith in Christ.



NEARER, my God, to Thee,  
Nearer to Thee !  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me ;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,—  
Nearer to Thee !

Though like the wanderer,  
The sun go down,  
Darkness be over me,  
My rest a stone ;  
Yet in my dreams I'd be  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,—  
Nearer to Thee !

There let the way appear,  
Steps unto heaven ;  
All that Thou sendest me  
In mercy given ;  
Angels to beckon me  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,—  
Nearer to Thee !

Then with my waking thoughts  
Bright with Thy praise,  
Out of my strong griefs  
Bethels I'll raise ;  
So by my woes to be  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,—  
Nearer to Thee !

And, when on joyful wing  
Cleaving the sky ;  
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,  
Upwards I fly ;  
Still all my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to Thee,—  
Nearer to Thee !

S. F. ADAMS.

## X.

### BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

**I**T is to be noted how uniformly in the New Testament the right to appropriate the promises is coupled with the name of Jesus Christ. Only believers in Him are recognised as having any interest in them. It does not matter what else men may or may not be ; the promises are only “given to them that believe ;” they are only inherited and obtained “through faith ;” they are all the “promises of God, in Him”—that is, in the Saviour. The Father has, as it were, committed to the Son the bounties of his grace to give to men, and they only receive them who come for them to Him. It is He who gives to him who overcometh to “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”—who gives “the crown of life” to those who are “faithful unto death”—who gives to eat of the hidden

man, and from whom the saint receives the white stone, with the new name written in it—it is He who blots out or records the names in the Book of Life—who “keeps us from the hour of temptation”—who makes his faithful servants pillars in the Temple of God—and from Him we are to seek the gold tried in the fire for our poverty, the white raiment for our nakedness, and the eye-salve for our blindness.

All the rich benefactions of God are thus in the keeping of Christ and dispensed by Him. Whatsoever we need we must ask in his name. He is “the way” by which alone we can reach the Father; it is only by his blood we have access to the Holiest. He is the Sun of Righteousness, of whose brightness the promises are so many beams; the Tree of Life of which they are the enlightening and life-giving fruit; the clear River of the Water of Life, of which if we drink we shall never die.

How this comes is seen when we think of the work Jesus has done, and the work He still does above. He is our life; He bought us from death by his cross. It is through Him we receive the adoption of sons. He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. We

have forgiveness of sins through his blood, and having thus opened the way for mercy, it is He who, since He has ascended on high, has received gifts for men—the gifts of the promises, which He freely bestows on all who believe in his name.

Yes; gives to all those who believe, but only to them, and by necessity so, even to our partial and inadequate understanding. Faith is another name for trust, and must lie at the root of all influence of one mind over another. The child catches the spirit and ways of its parents because it looks up to them with child-like reliance. The student is moulded in thought and opinion by the teacher in whom he has confidence; but slights and rejects the instructions of one towards whom it is wanting. We take advice from friends who have won our respect and trust as wise and sincere, but the heart is set against any counsel when it feels misgivings. We refuse to follow where we cannot confide. Our love and obedience depend on our feeling the claims of him who demands them. The mind and heart follow of their free will or they will not follow at all. So in religion. It, also, knows no constraint,

but must be the free and spontaneous homage of the soul, and there can be no such homage unless there be faith in Him to whom we are asked to pay them. Trust in Christ is the one condition on which alone we can benefit by Him in any relation in which He stands to us. As our Teacher, his words must be law. As our Saviour, whose death has redeemed us ; our Intercessor, whose pleading above secures us the grace we need ; as our King, to whom we must render a reverend, loving obedience, his power over our hearts must be through faith in his claims. It is for our sakes, not his, that faith is made the ground of receiving the gifts of his grace. They would be of no value if it were wanting, for they may all be summed up as the fruits, in the soul, of love towards Christ, and of his love to us. But love is the growth of trust. To have Him formed in us, to look to Him daily, to sit at his feet, to walk with Him by the way, to long for his appearing, to value heaven for its bringing us to Him for ever, make up Christianity. He is the believer's life, his hope, his joy, his all in all. He is the hidden treasure in the field of God's word ; the pearl of great price for which we

must gladly sell all that we have ; the morning star, fairest of all the host of heaven ; the day-spring from on high, lighting a world else sunk in night. Not to have faith in Him is, of course, to reject such transcendent claims ; and to reject Him is to reject the gifts He offers.

It follows that the more simple and earnest our loving trust, the more comfort and strength must lie in his words for us. Our faith in them gives them their worth to us. The more we trust the more we shall love, the more readily serve, the more humbly worship—that is, the more deep and holy will be our joy. To trust Him as our friend in life, in death, and for ever ; our Saviour, our Lord, our unchanging Friend, must cheer and sustain if the trust is complete and unchanging. We can never commit our interests to Him for time and eternity till our hearts accept Him as worthy their fullest faith, and in the measure in which they do so, our peace and joy will be full of glory.

Faith, moreover, is the great discipline by which we are trained for a higher life. To depend on God, to wait his pleasure, to follow Him on the strength of his word, to obey even

when it is hardest, quickens our moral nature, bends our pride, makes us learn dependence, accustoms us to that highest grace of submitting our will to that of God, leads us to seek his help and find our heaven in his smile. The spirit brought to a frame like this is already meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and though no one ever attains it fully, we come to a nearer or fainter approach to it as our loving faith is stronger or weaker.

Reader, have you put this trust in your God and Saviour? Do you thus make Christ all your salvation and all your desire?

### PRAYER.

O THOU! who art fairer than the sons of men, my Lord and my God, the way, the truth, and the life, grant me that I may see Thee as Thou art, here, that I may more gloriously behold Thee above. Send down Thy Spirit, blessed Jesus, and fill me with heavenly love to Thee, that I may hereafter behold Thee at the right hand of the Father, and bear Thine image for ever. Amen.

## **XI.**

### **Workers Together with God**



O LORD, how happy should we be,  
If we could cast our care on Thee,—  
If we from self could rest;  
And feel at heart that One above,  
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,  
Is working for the best!

How far from this our daily life!  
Ever disturbed by anxious strife,  
By sudden, wild alarms;  
Oh! could we but relinquish all  
Our earthly props, and simply fall  
On Thine Almighty arms!

Could we but kneel, and cast our load,  
E'en while we pray, upon our God,  
Then rise with lighten'd cheer—  
Sure that the Father, who is nigh  
To still the famished raven's cry,  
Will hear in that we fear!

We cannot trust Him as we should,  
So chafes fallen nature's restless mood  
To cast its peace away;  
Yet birds and flowrets round us preach,  
All, all the present evil teach,  
Sufficient for the day.

Lord, make these faithless hearts of ours  
Such lesson learn from birds and flowers,  
Make them from self to cease;  
Leave all things to a Father's will,  
And taste, before Him lying still,  
E'en in affliction, peace.

KEBLE.

## XI.

### WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.

GOD'S grace, in all his gifts and assurances to man, is absolutely free ; the power by which He carries out his will, whatever difficulties oppose,—almighty ; his love and purpose so unchangeable, that they can never be either varied or withdrawn ; his knowledge and wisdom so unsearchable, that He can always carry out what He has promised, in the best ways, and at the most fitting times. Yet it must not be thought that though his gracious favours are so sure and so spontaneous, we are left to enjoy them without any action or effort on our side. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, though it be still true that God works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Not that his will is ever against our salvation ; very far from it. He has no pleasure in the death of

him that dies, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live. He would have men everywhere repent. And if there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, though they be only our fellow-creatures, what must there be in the bosom of the Eternal Father, whose son was dead and is thus alive again, was lost and is thus found?

But the condition of reward is the same, for our own good, as if everything depended on ourselves. To make God's grace our own, we must do our part—must faithfully work, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The penny was given to the labourer in the vineyard, not to the loiterer in the market-place; the wells of salvation are open and free, but we must ourselves draw the joy-giving waters. Every metaphor implying zeal and diligence in securing the blessings of the Gospel is employed, in turn, as a motive and spur to us. We are to fight, to wrestle, to labour, to strive, to run, to make it the one thing we do, to be found in Christ. We are to work while it is day, for the night cometh, in which no man can work.

It is, of course, true, that the impulse to good

must come from God, and that the clean heart and right spirit are his gracious gifts; but it is none the less true that the Spirit, by whom we are made "new creatures," comes, unseen and mysterious, and quickens our higher life, without our hearing his footsteps; so that all we can do is to attribute all good thoughts whatever to his influence. We are thus at all times thrown on ourselves to strive towards the right, even from the first. We must seek, if we would find; to ask, that we may receive; to knock, that it may be opened. The Bible leaves the responsibility of our ruin at our own door, and speaks constantly as if everything depended on our own conduct. We must "come" to Christ; we must not "resist the Spirit;" we must "lay hold of eternal life." The forgiveness of sin is promised to him who repents, justification to him who believes, and the crown of life to him who is faithful to death. The condition of our receiving an increase of grace is our improving what we already enjoy; and we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world, if we are to stand blameless before God at last.

Thus faith and works go together; each is

dead if alone. Not that works save us ; they are, rather, the blossoms and fruit of our faith, which must show themselves if our faith be living. He who trusts in God must yet have due respect for the means and helps to obedience—the written word, the services of God's house, and the throne of grace. They are the hand of Christ stretched forth to save us from sinking in the troubled waters of daily life. To slight the means is to slight their author. The whole course of the life of God in the soul, from first to last, shows a co-operation of the divine and the human. If we are to have pardon, we must first show repentance ; if we are to be saints in heaven, we must have already been saints on earth. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, whatever his hopes or profession. The boat glides straight to its haven when the balanced oars urge it together ; but neither, alone, is enough. Faith on the one side must have works on the other to advance us towards heaven. To listen to some, you would think that their life was nothing, and their creed all. But the only creed that God will accept is one written in deeds rather than words. Not every one that

sayeth, "Lord, Lord," will be accepted, but he only who knows the will of his heavenly Father, and does it. If a man does not work, he is not to eat the bread that perishes; and the same law applies to the bread that endures to life eternal.

Beware, then, of a light and unwarranted estimate of the conditions of receiving the promises. If holy Paul had fear and trembling at the thought of what was implied in his having to work out his own salvation, what self-distrust, what prayerful zeal, what constant watchfulness, should mark such unworthy beings as we! If our Blessed Lord tells us that we must strive, and labour, and watch, and pray: strive, as with agonizing effort; labour, as with utmost diligence; watch, as on a soldier's post; pray without ceasing; if He speak of the gate as strait and the way as narrow; if He can only compare the Christian life to a daily bearing the Cross—the symbol of humiliation, and shame, and death—what must our past and present lives seem in his eyes? There is no need for despair, for his grace is sufficient for us; his strength is made perfect in weakness; and where there are the

will and the effort to obey, He takes them for the performance. But there is no room for presumption. It becomes us to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear—fear, not of God's grace, but of our sinful hearts—fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. Let us set a high standard before us, and earnestly strive to live up to it. We cannot do better than turn to the Scriptures, and ponder their words and examples till our souls burn within us to realise them in ourselves. We hear a great deal of faith, and rightly; but we ought to hear a great deal more than we do about works. Our religion is far too easy and comfortable; we take it for granted, too readily, that it will answer, if we copy our neighbours rather than Christ. There is no need of alarm, as if we were hopeless; but there is much need of self-examination and lowliness. Blessed be God, if we feel our shortcomings, He is near for our aid. He will not quench the faintest spark of spiritual life, nor break the feeblest reed. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength. Humble sincerity in

the ways of God, as the fruit of loving, obedient faith in Christ, makes us heirs of the promises, and, if we have it, we shall ever feel ourselves called upon, more and more, to carry out, with God's help, the apostle's injunction, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.



Out ! out, away !  
Soul, in this alien house thou hast no stay !  
Seek thou thy dwelling in eternity ;  
'Tis there shall be  
Thy hiding-place, thy nest,  
Where nor the world, nor self, can break thy rest.  
Within the heart of God,  
There is thy still abode,—  
There may'st thou dwell at rest and be at home,  
Howe'er the body here may toil and roam.

GERHARD TERSTEEGEN, 1697—1769.

XII.

Our Chiefest Joy.

I now have found abiding rest,  
For which I long was sighing ;  
Now on my Saviour's faithful breast  
My weary head is lying.  
This is the place where sin, no more,  
Nor death nor hell alarm me ;  
I now am safe, by Jesu's power,  
From all that else would harm me.

He whispers me—"I'm wholly thine,  
And thou art mine for ever ;  
Henceforth all fear and doubt resign,  
Confiding in my favour !  
Thy ev'ry want shall find supply  
From my exhaustless treasures ;  
I'll fill thy spirit with my joy,  
The pledge of endless pleasures !"

From Jesus and his love, who now,  
By terrors to divide me,  
My great and many sins would show !  
His wounds from vengeance hide me ;  
My sins are great—I'll not despair,  
Though conscience, too, arraigns me ;  
Nor doubt my Saviour's watchful care—  
His arm of love sustains me.

I thank Thee, God's beloved Son,  
Thy boundless grace adoring,  
Which brought Thee from Thy glorious throne,  
Our peace with God restoring.  
O make my heart a shrine, where peace  
Shall keep her constant dwelling ;  
Where grateful peace shall never cease  
Abroad Thy glories telling.

ANONYMOUS.

## XII.

### OUR CHIEFEST JOY.

CHILDHOOD judges of things by their nearness or by their apparent size, rather than by the wiser standards of after-years. An hour's pleasure at hand outweighs a day's, if it be future, and a small object close by is thought to be larger than a much greater, diminished by distance. Unfortunately, this foolish readiness to under-estimate the remote,—to seek immediate gratification, rather than wait for greater, and to judge importance by illusory fancies,—is a weakness common to every age. It has its influence even in our thoughts about the promises of God, leading us to set too much store on those which affect the present, and too little on the far greater bounties that are reserved for the life to come. Take care that you yield to no such false and unworthy tendencies: see that you set things in the due rank and order in your minds that God has intended. His

command is—"Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and then follows the assurance—"And all these things will be added unto you." The soul and its interests must take precedence of all things besides ; the reign of God in our hearts,—the doing his will in our lives,—is to lie nearer our thoughts than our outward wants and affairs. We seek the bread that perishes, without caring much for that which comes down from heaven, and are far more anxious for the clothing of the body, than that our souls be provided with the robe of righteousness. We have favourite promises, fulfilled now, without keeping us waiting ; the others we lay up as a reserve, to be used when needed, but as of less worth till then.

As in much else, our better judgments are overruled by our lower nature. We forget that what is now future, will, ere long, be on us, and that it is of unspeakably greater moment to be prepared for it, than to gain the things of the passing hour. But there is another error no less fatal. We set the interests of the present life in opposition to those of the life to come, and act on the implied belief, that to gain the one we must abandon the other. If we must

make a choice, we determine to secure the present world first, with a cloudy trust that, after all, we shall not thereby lose the promises laid up in the one to come,—like the poor French lady, who got it written as her epitaph, that she made her Paradise on earth, lest there should be any error about that hereafter. We make sure of what is within reach around us, for fear of finding nothing beyond death, in spite of all the Bible says ; often sliding, besides, into the wretched thought, that to devote ourselves to religious things at once, would exclude the chance of ever getting the enjoyment of our lives. There is no such contradiction hinted at, between a happy and a godly life, in any part of Scripture. To be religious may deter us from immoral gains, and wrong ambitions ; may close many sources of unworthy pleasure, and illicit profit ; but all we lose will be only what our consciences have already condemned, and what, we cannot help owning, it is our highest good not to get. It will not make us the less industrious, or clear-sighted, or successful in our worldly affairs, to give God his right place in our hearts ; but, on the contrary, to honour Him is the surest hope of sound prosperity. To be sin-

cerely religious, is to be thoroughly upright ; to be unselfish, pure, just, temperate, diligent, truthful,—all, in short, that wins respect, and forms the highest character. An honest, God-fearing man, shrewd, intelligent, practical, but at the same time conscientious, has a pledge, in his very principles, of success in life.

I do not deny that unscrupulous men may make profitable strokes by means which a religious man must needs condemn, but, after all, success is to be measured by a higher standard than mere material results. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses. To have much is not to be happy. Self-respect must sweeten all our gain, to make it worth the having, and the heart must feel that it has something more than money or position to fall back upon, to be composed, in view of the eternity so near us all. To have a little less of earth, and a bright hope beyond, is, surely, truer riches than mere money and a troubled breast. The very retrospect of a godly man, over a life which raises no upbraidings as he brings it in review, is, itself, a sweet possession, for which a richer man, without such comfort, might well sigh.

See, then, that you give the first place in your thoughts and love, to God. Determine, before all, to make the promises of his eternal kingdom yours, and then, when you thus covet earnestly the best gifts first, you may safely ask for the lower blessings of this present life. First, holiness; then, worldly good. First, the life of God in your soul, and, then, the good things of the passing hour. Salvation, immortality, the fellowship of angels, and the image of our Maker, are worth our chief concern. To desire to be happy is natural and right, but true and lasting happiness can only follow holiness. Make it your highest care to secure the welfare of your never-dying spirit, and then you will be free to turn with a calm mind to the lesser matters of daily necessities and desires.

### PRAYER.

GREAT and glorious God, who hast called Thyself the portion of Thy people, may I make Thee my portion now and for ever: may all things else be kept subordinate to Thee, that, thus, setting Thee before me here, I may stand before Thy face hereafter, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Jesu be ne'er forgot,  
That the World harm us not !  
False is she, proud, and cold,  
False are her gifts and gold.

Jesu be ne'er forgot,  
That Honour harm us not !  
Brittle as glass her throne,  
Worthless as straws her crown.

Jesu be ne'er forgot,  
That her Pomp hurt us not !  
Pomp and the praise of men  
Vanish in mist again.

Jesu be ne'er forgot,  
That the Flesh hurt us not !  
Dust all, and merest show  
What doth so fairly glow.

O Flesh, O fading grass,  
Passing as bubbles pass ;  
Fresh to-day, and rosy red,  
Sick to-morrow, pale and dead !

ANGELUS SILESIVS, 1624—1677.

XIII.

*The Use of Meditation.*

THERE is an hour of peaceful rest  
To mourning wanderers given ;  
There is a joy for souls distressed,  
A balm for every wounded breast—  
'Tis found above—in heaven.

There is a soft, a downy bed,  
'Tis fair as breath of even ;  
A couch for weary mortals spread,  
Where they may rest the aching head,  
And find repose—in heaven.

There is a home for weary souls,  
By sin and sorrow driven ;  
When toss'd in life's tempestuous shoals,  
Where storms arise and ocean rolls,  
And all is drear—but heaven.

There faith lifts up her cheerful eye,  
To brighter prospects given ;  
And views the tempest passing by,  
The evening shadows quickly fly,  
And all serene—in heaven.

There, fragrant flowers immortal bloom,  
And joys supreme are given :  
There, joys divine disperse the gloom—  
Beyond the confines of the tomb  
Appears the dawn of heaven.

W. B. TAPPAN.

### XIII.

#### THE USE OF MEDITATION.

**W**INE is not found in the cluster as it hangs on the vine, but flows from it when trodden in the wine press. So, the promises yield their richness, not to him who merely looks at them, but to the pressing and force of godly meditation. It is not the bee that touches the flower that gets its sweets, but he that rests on it, and bends into its cup. A passing thought of God's gracious words is, at best, like the dew,—refreshing, but not of itself sufficient; meditation brings us the enriching rains of his blessing, that sink into the depths. Roses are sweet on the stalk, but it is only when you distil them that you get their full strength. A jewel may be bright in the casket, but it must be held up in varying lights to see it in its full glory. It is with the wide heaven of any of the promises as with the evening skies; at first we see only a single star, but as we look

again and again, clusters and galaxies shine out as the darkness deepens, till the whole night is radiant. Meditation is the vital heat of the soul, that turns its natural food to heavenly nourishment. We must, like Mary, ponder the sacred words that are given us, and lay them up in our hearts. Jerome used to call meditation his paradise; Theophylact called it the gate and portal by which we enter into glory, and Basil calls it the treasure-house where we find all the graces. If you ask what it means, the words used for it in the Old and New Testaments give the answer. It is to "talk with your own heart,"—to "speak with your soul" in the low murmur of the thoughts—to "dwell upon" the words of God till you have realized somewhat of their fulness. We all know how the mother lingers over the letter of her far-a-way child, till she has made every word and line yield her its utmost light and comfort, or how the child, in trouble, and, it may be, faint and stricken, in some foreign clime, kisses the lines that bring him the sympathy and love of her who is his dearest thought, broad oceans off, at home—kisses them—weeps over them—and

learns each syllable by heart. We all know how, in youth, we fondly dwelt on the simplest note from her who was the idol of our heart, in those days when it was warmest and most pure. To do the same with the sweet words of God is to be perfect in the art of heavenly meditation. Turn them over; ponder what they may mean, in every fresh light in which you see them. Look at them in the remembrance of the Almighty power of Him who speaks them; in the remembrance of his unfailing wisdom; of the unsearchable riches of his great love, and of his divine unchangeableness. It does not need that you have fixed seasons for meditation, though, if you can snatch a few moments for thoughts on spiritual things, at stated hours, so much the better. David communed with his heart upon his bed, in the night watches; and there is no better time,—for darkness, and the silence that it brings, leave the thoughts free from the distractions of the day, and make us masters of ourselves, as we hardly are in busy hours. But he did not the less meditate on God's law by day, that he dwelt on it thus by night. Take some promise suited to your case, with you, when you go to your

daily business, and let it come into your thoughts in the intervals of your occupation. The mind will wander in our busiest hours ; let yours wander towards God, if only to glance upwards for an instant into the purer light. It will come back the stronger for the moment's glimpse it has had of heaven. To him who wishes to find time for loving thoughts of anything, there never yet wanted opportunity. The trouble is that, in religious things, our hearts are like green wood, hard to set a-flame. It is well to keep to a single promise at a time, for intelligent emotion is more easily excited by particulars than by vague and undefined considerations. To let the eye follow different objects, is to realise none of them, and confuses it, but to keep the attention fixed on one leaves a more vivid image, and gives us that on which we may dwell with clearness after. Indeed, the heart cannot hold all the greatness of even a single promise of God, any more than it can realise all that is taught by even the smallest of his works. As a single grain of incense perfumes a whole chamber, when more would overpower with its richness, a single promise pondered at a time fills the whole soul with

heavenly delight, where the spirit would faint with the glory of many dwelt on together.

It is sad to think how we miss the fulness of comfort designed for us. God has not left it lying on the surface of his word, but requires us to dig for it as for hidden treasures. It is concealed, like the wealth of the Indian mines, or the pearls of the Indian seas. We content ourselves with momentary flashes of spiritual illumination, when we might enjoy the steady shining of the light—with a passing brightness which is presently gone, and leaves us as dark as before. We draw water from the pools made by sudden showers, rather than from the full streams of habitual meditation.

Let it be your care, however, not to mistake mere intellectual speculations, which are barren as the tops of cedars, for that musing of the heart which is fruitful as the valleys and the creeping vine. The affections must be engaged, else no blessing will follow, and for this it is needful that we bring ourselves into a holy frame by the help of frequent and fervent prayer, which raises our natures from their common level of earthliness, kindling and purifying them in the upper brightness. But



do not forget that they only have a right to appropriate the promises who obey the commandments: that they are gifts to God's children, not to his enemies, and that we must live worthily to meditate usefully. Any one of a certain disposition may excite himself into raptures over the great things which God has prepared for them that love Him, but it is only self deception, where these exaltations are not the natural and legitimate growth of our deeper nature. Read with diligence, over and over, what God has spoken; lay it up in the secret place of your soul; day by day go in thither and take a portion for the day, and make it the refreshment of your heart. One morsel of bread eaten is worth a harvest looked at. You will find a great help in the little text-books of promises, one for each day, which are so common. Let one lie on your morning table; carry a line of it with you in your memory, as you leave your room, and it will strengthen you till you return. A little chink lets in a great deal of light, and a few words of Scripture bring wonderful comfort. To have even a single promise, in large letters, hung up in your private chamber is an additional

help to meditation, which you will find of great use. Nor need you fear to exhaust its fulness, for in the shortest verse there is mirrored all the glory of God ; as the whole round of the heavens contracts itself into a single drop of dew.

### PRAYER.

My gracious God and Father, as Thou hast given me the rich treasures of Thy word, teach me to use them aright. May I not slight them by a vague respect, but meditate on them day and night like Thine ancient servant. Yea, Lord, from this tree of life may my soul take daily the fruits needed for the day and eat and live for ever. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

MORNING Star in darksome night,  
Who the sad earth makest bright,

I am Thine,  
In me shine,  
Fill me with Thy light divine !

Lo, Thy heaven is in me here,  
Longs to see its Star appear ;  
Break of Day !  
No more delay,  
Come and chase these mists away !

For Thy brightness, O my Star,  
Earth's poor sun surpasseth far ;  
From Thy sight,  
Lovely Light !  
Other suns must hide in night.

All things stand revealed by Thee,  
Past, and Present, and To-Be,  
And Thy smile,  
Can, erewhile,  
Night, itself, of gloom beguile.

Where Thy joyous splendours dart,  
Faith soon follows in the heart ;  
Star most clear !  
Far and near,  
Thou, as Lord, art worshipped here !

Come, then, Golden Light of Souls,  
Ere fresh darkness o'er me rolls,  
Be Thou mine,  
In me shine,  
Fill me with Thy light divine !

ANGELUS SILESIVS, 1624—1677.

XIV.

Wait Thou upon God.

STILL, still with Thee—when purple morning breaketh,  
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;  
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight  
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee!

Alone with Thee—amid the mystic shadows,  
The solemn hush of nature newly born;  
Alone with Thee, in breathless adoration,  
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

As in the dawning, o'er the waveless ocean,  
The image of the morning star doth rest,  
So, in this stillness, Thou beholdest only  
Thine image in the waters of my breast.

Still, still with Thee! as to each new-born morning  
A fresh and solemn splendour still is given,  
So does this blessed consciousness awaking,  
Breathe, each day, nearness unto Thee and heaven.

When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber,  
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer,  
Sweet the repose beneath Thy wings o'ershading,  
But sweeter still, to wake and find Thee there.

So shall it be at last, in that bright morning,  
When the soul waketh, and the shadows flee;  
Oh! in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,  
Shall rise the glorious thought—I am with Thee!

H. B. STOWE.

## XIV.

### WAIT THOU UPON GOD.

**I**T is the characteristic of children that, unless they receive a benefit at once, they fret and murmur, with no strength of character to bear an interval of expectation. What is given must be given at once, if we would please them. And yet this intemperate haste to get what they want, is only so great because they are what they are. But it is too much the same with not a few, even of ripe years, among God's people. They may be grateful when mercies come unexpectedly, but they repine and are fretful if they have to wait. It cannot be, however, that they should be indulged like spoiled children, with their whims and wishes, at the moment, if the promises are to have their due use in their spiritual training. For all God's gifts have a higher purpose than the passing service of a day, or the relief of care, or the lightening mere earthly burdens. They

are sent, no doubt, in part, to bless us here, but much rather for that for which they fit us hereafter, and they are necessarily often delayed till we be fit to receive them, as the sowing of a field is deferred till the soil is prepared and the season suits. It would be no good to scatter grain on unploughed furrows, nor to sow in wrong months. A promise fulfilled while we were spiritually unprepared to improve it, would be as fruitless as a rich shower on the barren sea, or on the stony crag. In grace, as in nature, there is a season for everything.

Still, there are promises of quicker and slower fruitage—as the almond-tree blossoms in the first of the spring, and others all through the summer, even to autumn. Our daily food comes daily, and God's spiritual gifts only wait our asking at any moment, but special mercies are often withheld for long. The promises made to Abraham were left to a very late fulfilment. He was to possess the land, but he had to wait till he was a hundred years old, and till Sarah's age seemed to wither all human expectancy, before he saw his heir in his son Isaac. The larger promise

made to his seed had an additional ground for its being delayed, in its touching the general purpose of God in Providence, and had to lie dormant for four hundred years before it bore fruit. Yet, in due time—that is, in God's time, Israel, held in Egyptian bondage for generations, crossed the divided Jordan, and entered the promised land.

It does not become us to measure the times that seem best to the Almighty, by our own fancies. To Him ages are moments, and human life only a pulse in the flow of eternity. We, standing low, see no distance; He, looking down from the heavens, sees the whole course of our being through unending duration. What we think delay is all-wise apportionment; the withholding what will hurt, if given now, that He may give it when it will be a lasting good. We may be certain that as a child is better under a father's government than if his own foolish impulses and ignorant judgments were left to rule, we are infinitely better in our Heavenly Father's hands than in our own.

Still, it is in our nature to get dispirited, and even to waver in our faith, when the



promises are long of coming. Our hope languishes into despair, our submission and patience turn to murmuring; our faith sinks to distrust, and our hearts begin to think that the evil we suffer "is of the Lord," and "why should we wait upon Him any longer?"\* Take heed that you guard against such a frame. "Though it tarry, wait for it." "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God." Do with the delay as Elijah's servant at Carmel, who still went to the hill-top, though he saw nothing till his seventh ascent. If your hopes are put off, still trust and wait upon God continually, for "the word that goeth forth out of his mouth shall not return unto Him void, but shall accomplish that which He pleaseth, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it."

I know it is hard to wait, but I know also that it is unspeakably the best to do so. The prophet indicates the true spirit for our good, as well as our becoming duty—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; though the labour of the olive shall

\* 2 Kings vi. 33.

fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I shall rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." \* "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it," and shall not we be contented to wait for the harvest of God's promises? But we are like sick men, who feel their ailments, and can ill abide the slowness of recovery, and think it the fault of the physician that he does not hurry nature beyond her pace, when it is for their good he refrains from doing so. Be wiser. The great Physician knows your case. He is too wise to err—too good to be unkind. If He give you what is bitter for the moment, it is that you may have joys that will be sweet for eternity ; if He keep you low for a time, it is that He may raise you for ever.

Remember that there are many ways of fulfilling God's promises, and that the promises we think suited to us may not seem so to the All-wise. We may be looking for one when another is being fulfilled without our noticing.

\* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Some come in visible showers of blessing; others distil as the unseen dew. Some come in sweet spiritual influences; others show themselves in the dispensations of outward providence. It does not follow that we do not receive what we need because we do not get what we ask. St. Paul besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might be removed, but it was left with him still, with the gracious announcement that it was better it should, since Christ's grace was sufficient to bear him up under it, and his strength was made perfect in weakness. Even our Blessed Lord's prayer, that the cup should pass from Him, did not deliver Him from it, but He had that which was far better, in the being able to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." Rely on it, the Lord is good to all them that wait for Him, to them that hope in his mercy. Patience, submission, contentment, persevering faith—these are the messengers of the soul, that enter through the gates of heaven—whose hands God fills with his gracious gifts that they may bear them back to us, to bless us. "Faithful is He that has promised, who also will do it."

## PRAYER.

OUR Father, who art in heaven, teach me to feel that Thou art my Father, and that Thou carest for me as only Thou canst who never slumberest nor sleepest in the care of Thy people, and who art their shield and their exceeding great reward, in this world as well as the next. May I trust Thy love, and confide in Thy wisdom, and wait Thy pleasure, being kept in perfect peace by being stayed on Thee. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

LOVELY, shadowy, soft and still  
Is the eventide,  
Ah ! if but my heart and will  
Evermore might so abide !  
God, Thy presence can alone  
Make this lovely calm my own.

GERHARD TERSTEEGEN, 1697—1769.

XV.

Hope Thou in God.

O THOU, who driest the mourner's tear,  
How dark this world would be  
If, when deceived and wounded here,  
We could not fly to Thee!

But Thou wilt heal the broken heart,  
Which, like the plants that throw  
Their fragrance from the wounded part,  
Breathes sweetness out of woe.

When joy no longer soothes or cheers,  
And e'en the hope that threw  
A moment's sparkle o'er our tears  
Is dimmed and vanished too;

O, who would bear life's stormy doom,  
Did not Thy wing of love  
Come brightly wafting through the gloom,  
Our peace-branch from above?

Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright  
With more than rapture's ray,  
As darkness shows us worlds of light  
We never saw by day.

MOORE.

## XV.

### HOPE THOU IN GOD.

**F**EEBLE health seldom rests contented with the common assistances of sickness, however varied or commended, but has ever some favourite remedy, kept close at hand, to use at the moment, in preference to all others, when emergencies assail. In times of alarm, we all are wont to do much the same, trusting to some specific which we keep ever within reach, or bear about us, rather than to any general treatment, when attacked. It is very desirable to act in the same way with the promises ; to fix on some one or two for each particular trouble, that we may have them always with us for instant remedy against temptations and trials. It is not enough for our comfort that we can always betake ourselves to the rich stores of the Scriptures ; they are scattered over the whole surface of God's word, and the soul may have to suffer for a time before it light upon



that which meets its present case. At one time it craves the sense of pardon ; at another it sighs for greater holiness ; at still another, it feels its need of God's guardian care ; and not seldom it may cry out for some assurance that He will not forget the daily wants of this passing life. To have some word of comfort and support, to which to betake ourselves in all our needs, is of more immediate benefit than to know that we can find them by searching, even if the text we remember be in no way richer in divine assurance than many others. The desert flower that roused the fainting traveller, by reviving trust in Him who cared for a thing so frail, was no sweeter than a whole world of flowers that blossomed elsewhere, but its presence, just then and there, made it worth more than all others on earth, to him, at the time. Hagar's spring in the desert was, likely, no clearer or fuller than many, besides, bubbling up here and there, in these lonely wastes, but its waters must have been more precious to her than all waters else, as she held a draught of them to the lips of her sinking boy, and put them to her own, parched and dry with a deadly thirst. The star that shines out through the

first rift in the storm may be fainter than many we see each night, but the tempest-tossed sailor hails it with greater joy than he would the brightest in heaven, in calmer weather, as the promise of safety, and the sign that the clouds are breaking away. Is your soul oppressed with guilt, and ready to sink into despair? There are many great and precious promises that may meet your case; but if you can at the moment recall some assurance, in God's own words, of his free mercy to sinners, is it not like the flower in the desert, or the spring in the dry and thirsty land, or the star beaming out through the lowering storm? What can be more blessed to such a one than the remembrance of such a verse from the lips of God Himself, proclaiming his love and pity: "I am the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin?"\* or those blessed words, "The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me?"† He is "the Lord, the Lord God;" what can be too hard for him? what sins too great for Him to

\* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

† Gal. ii. 20.

pardon? what soul too vile for Him to save? He is "merciful," and as such is infinitely more ready to pardon than to condemn. He is "gracious"—not looking for merit in us, but, of his boundless goodness, healing our backslidings and loving us freely, while we are yet sinners—shining on us as the sun shines on the black earth, and turning it into radiant beauty. He is "long-suffering," for He is not willing that any should perish, but would fain that all should come to repentance, and it grieves his heart, as the Great Father, that He should ever need to let justice smite. "He suffereth long and is kind," for his name is Love. "He is slow to anger, and of great kindness," for He waits and waits for the return of his prodigal child, when all others have long since abandoned him, and He welcomes him back to his heart and his home, after all his wanderings and all his sins. He is "abundant in goodness," as your own experience can witness; for how else would you still be alive to seek his favour? He "pardons abundantly," He has "abundant grace," for He invites the chief of sinners to accept forgiveness, and He bestows his gifts above

what any could ask or think. The plenteous rain with which He waters the earth, the effulgent light with which He fills the heavens, the flowing fulness with which He brims the channels of mighty rivers, are but types of his boundless goodness. He has promised that his blessings will "come down as the rain." He has told us that his going forth is "prepared like the morning," and there is a "river of pleasures at his right hand." Our goodness is intermitted, uncertain, clouded; but He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the stream of his unspeakable love flows on through all ages. He is "abundant in truth," for "not one good thing fails of all that He speaks concerning his people." Men may forget or may break their promises, but God is not a man that He should lie, and his omniscience keeps all things ever before Him. His mercies are sure, his covenant everlasting. "Happy is the man whose hope is the Lord his God, who keepeth truth for ever." He "keeps mercy for thousands"—ay, to "a thousand generations." Our short-lived race cannot help their descendants; but He is the same to the latest generation as to the first. The promises given

of old are in full force to-day, like the ordinance of the light or of the clouds, which are as sure to us as they were to our earliest fathers. The sun is no fainter now than when first created, nor the clouds less rich in their ministries, for all the showers with which they have watered the earth. Nor does the morning break only over some favoured spots ; it shines from the east to the west, and the soft rains fall on all lands. He “forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin,” all the forms of wrong-doing against Him, that no one may fear that his offences exclude him. Men forgive some things, but think others too great to be pardoned ; God casts all our sins into the depths of the sea for ever ; He blots them out as the mid-day sun blots out the cloud from the sky. What sinner need fear, or doubt, with such assurances ? Who can longer shrink back as if they were not as free to him as to others, when he remembers those words : “He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me* ?” If the child of God feel at times that his graces languish, and dread that they may utterly fail, what solace is there in that declaration : “He will be our guide, even to death !” and that

“no one will ever pluck us out of his hand !” In times of anxiety for the daily wants of life, who can despair, if he remember such a verse as, “Trust in the Lord and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed ?” What protection and safety lie in that promise, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee !” It reads as if written to remind us how the sea and the river opened to his people of old, and how the fiery furnace had no power over his faithful confessors. How calmly, with such supports, may the believer rest, whatever befall him ! Single promises laid up in his heart meet all his wants and exceed all his hopes, and if so, what wealth must be his, in the whole roll of God’s gracious declarations of love and favour ! His soul safe, his graces fed daily from heavenly fountains, his earthly life secured from wanting any good thing—how should he be able both to lie down and sleep, the God of Jacob thus keeping watch ! Hope thou, O my soul ! in the Lord.

In God, my faithful God,  
I trust when dark my road ;  
Though many woes o'ertake me,  
Yet He will not forsake me ;  
His love it is doth send them,  
And when 'tis best will end them.

My sins assail me sore,  
But I despair no more :  
I trust in Christ who loves me,  
From this Rock nothing moves me,  
Since I can all surrender  
To Him, my soul's Defender.

If death my portion be,  
Then death is gain to me,  
And Christ my life for ever,  
From whom no death can sever.  
Come when it may, He'll shield me,  
To Him I wholly yield me.

Ah Jesus Christ, my Lord !  
So meek in deed and word,  
Didst Thou not die to save us,  
Because Thou fain wouldst have us,  
After this life of sadness,  
Heirs of Thy heavenly gladness ?

"So be it" then, I say  
Heartily, day by day !  
Guide us while here we wander,  
Till safely landed yonder ;  
We too, dear Lord, adore Thee,  
And sing with joy before Thee !

WEINGARTNER.

**XVI.**

**The Lord God of Our Fathers.**



O God of Bethel, by whose hand  
Thy people still are fed ;  
Who through this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led ;

Our vows, our prayers we now present  
Before Thy throne of grace ;  
God of our fathers, be the God  
Of their succeeding race.

Through each perplexing path of life  
Our wandering footsteps guide :  
Give us, each day, our daily bread,  
And raiment fit provide.

O spread Thy covering wings around  
Till all our wanderings cease,  
And, at our Father's loved abode,  
Our souls arrive in peace.

Such blessings from Thy gracious hand  
Our humble prayers implore ;  
And Thou shalt be our chosen God  
And portion evermore.

LOGAN.

## XVI.

### THE LORD GOD OF OUR FATHERS.

**T**HERE is no greater aid to trust in our fellow-men than to be able to recal cases of their faithfulness in engagements previously made with others. Every instance of fidelity strengthens the reasonableness of our own expectations, and, if they be numerous, we come to feel an implicit reliance which abates every anxiety, and gives much of the joy of possession. It is the same with the promises of God, for it cannot but strengthen the heart of the Christian when his faith is tried, whether from within or without, to bring to mind some of the numberless illustrations of God's glorious faithfulness shown in days gone by. The sinner, burdened by a sense of guilt, might well fear his case extreme and beyond the reach of mercy. Assurances of free and full forgiveness are multiplied throughout the

Scriptures, to keep any from despair; but yet the heart writes bitter things against itself at times, and refuses to be comforted. You may remind it that Jesus expressly says that He has given himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity,\* or that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.† You may repeat the blessed promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool." Still, some gloomy turn will be given even to words so all-sufficient, and the comfort they should give be lost. It seems impossible that such scarlet sins as it bewails should turn like the stainless snow; or such guilt, as the fleecy wool. The white robe of innocence seems something vain to hope for; there seems no ray of hope in any words, however full and gracious. I have known a poor soul recount all its transgressions, till they rose before it like great mountains, hiding the light of divine mercy. It appeared too great a condescension, even for God, to forgive a rebel who had stood out against so many overtures of mercy; who had shown himself

\* Titus ii. 13, 14.

† 1 John i. 7.

so set to do evil ; who had closed his eyes that he might not see a pleading Saviour, and shut his heart against his tender entreaties. But there often comes a blessed ray of hope through the darkness, when the many instances of pardon granted to the greatest sinners are called to mind. The Cross, hidden till now in the shadows of despair, shines out again with a holy light that irresistibly draws the soul to its foot. Cheer up, O sad heart ! The white flag of mercy is still hung out to returning sinners, who humble themselves before Christ for pardon. Manasseh was a notorious sinner ; he built altars for Baal ; he worshipped and served all the host of heaven ; he caused his sons to pass through the fire ; he made Judah to sin more wickedly than the heathen, whom the Lord destroyed before Israel ; he caused the streets of Jerusalem to run down with innocent blood, much of it the blood of martyred saints—yet, when he humbled himself and sought the Lord, the Lord was entreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem, and made himself known to him as his forgiving and pardoning God. Zaccheus, once an extortioner, had

Christ himself to bring salvation to his house. Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, was received into his loving favour. The dying thief was taken from a justly deserved cross, in the Saviour's own company, that same day to Paradise. Peter that denied his Lord with oaths and curses, was restored to more honour than he lost, and it was to him and Mary Magdalene that He first showed himself when He had risen from the dead—as if to give encouragement to the greatest sinners ever after. Then, was not Paul, who persecuted the Church of God, and blasphemed the sacred name, till he felt that he had to write himself a chief of sinners, not only welcomed back when he sought forgiveness in true humility, but made a chosen vessel to bear God's mercy over the earth? No one could be worse than some of these, and yet they have now, for many hundred years, been with Christ in glory. The grace that could save them could save any. With such examples before it, the despairing soul sees the promises shine out in golden letters on its dark sky, and takes heart to trust them after all. "At the worst," it says, "I am but another prodigal, long wandering, but

now come to my right mind ; and the same Father that took pity on the guilty one of old, has room in his great heart for me as well."

So, in all the cares and anxieties of life, the Bible gives examples of the faithfulness of God that may well confirm us in a patient waiting upon Him. The God who led Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob to the city that hath foundations, is still the same to all who follow Him as they did. He who raised up Joseph from the pit to the second place in Egypt has still the same care for his people, and the same power to help them. The loving-kindness shown by Him to his servant David is as abundant to-day as then. He has ever been mindful of his covenant. It has been the testimony of his saints in all ages that He is not slack concerning his promises, but careful to fulfil them to their least details. Have you not, yourself, seen, in many cases, how He has brought light out of darkness, and given the oil of gladness for the spirit of heaviness, to those who trust in his name,—and made their end, like that of Job, better than the beginning? Even in your own life have there not been instances of this un-

changing, unslumbering care and faithfulness? Has He not stretched his bow on many a dark cloud? Has He not calmed your fears, removed your troubles, restored your soul, spread your table before you, and made you feel that He was a God near at hand, and not afar off? If you be anxious for the things of this life, remember the daily manna,—enough each day for the day's wants, all the way through the wilderness. Remember the widow's cruse that outlasted the harvest of all the olive-yards of the land, and her barrel of meal that had some left in it when the storehouses of Ahab were empty. Remember Elijah's cake and the cruse of water, under the juniper tree, a day's journey in the barren desert, and the ravens sent daily to his hiding-place by the brook. Remember the ram caught in the thicket when Abraham was in his sore extremity, and trust that in your case, as in his, the Lord will provide. Remember how the very sea sent tribute money when Christ required it, and gave Cæsar his due from the mouth of a fish. Remember the dew on the fleece, when the ground around it was dry. Keep in mind the five thousand fed from the scanty burden of a poor lad. These

things were written for our example, that we might trust in God when hope seems to have least encouragement. If ever the promises seem less sure to you than in other days, send forth your thoughts to the proofs and pledges of his truth, which He has vouchsafed in the history of his saints in all generations. "Our fathers trusted in Thee ; they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee and were delivered ; they trusted in Thee and were not confounded ;" and his great and precious promises are to us, their children, as well as to them.

#### PRAYER.

GLORIOUS and ever-faithful God, help me to put my trust in Thee in all the changes of life, in health or sickness, in prosperity or want, in life or in death. Help me to have no fears or misgivings, but at all times to rest contented with Thy will, and calmly cheerful, knowing that Thou doest all things well, and wilt never forsake them who lean upon Thy word. I ask it through Jesus Christ. Amen.



SEE the Saviour's outstretched arm,  
Sinners to redeem from harm.—

Come!

Where?

To Jesu's bosom.

Seek salvation freely offered.

Seek it!

Where?

In Jesu's bosom.

Live ye, die ye, all to Him.

Take his yoke and learn of Him—

Rest!

Where?

In Jesu's bosom.

BACH's *Passion Music*.

XVII.

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

COME, O Creator-Spirit blest !  
And in our souls take up Thy rest ;  
Come, with Thy grace and heavenly aid,  
To fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

Great Paraclete, to Thee we cry ;  
O highest gift of God most high !  
O fount of life ! O fire of love !  
And sweet anointing from above !

Kindle our senses from above,  
And make our hearts o'erflow with love ;  
With patience firm, and virtue high,  
The weakness of our flesh supply.

Far from us drive the foe we dread,  
And grant us Thy true peace instead :  
So shall we not, with Thee for guide,  
Turn from the path of life aside.

LYRA CATH.

## XVII.

### COME, HOLY SPIRIT!

**G**OD has made man, alone, of all the creatures, capable of communion with himself. He has formed us in his own image, able to rise above the limits of the seen, to the invisible, and so noble, that He himself vouchsafes to dwell in our breasts. The soul within us is akin to his own, and was made as it is that we might be his earthly temple. "The inspiration of the Almighty," we are told, "gives us understanding." To it we owe not merely our natural life, but that of the soul. Whatever good there is in us comes from God, as all the light we enjoy comes from the sun. His Spirit is our soul's soul, quickening its otherwise lifeless faculties, and the spring of all its power and motion towards truth. I do not speak of our intellectual faculties, though they, too, owe all that they are to God, but to our religious,

which are dead and passive without his creating breath, as the clay form of Adam before He gave it a living spirit. As the light fills the crystal, without misplacing or destroying its parts, as the subtle pulses of the electric fluid pass at their pleasure through the solid earth, the heavenly inspiration enters and takes possession of the soul, leaving it its own attributes, but brightening them with added power and glory.

That we may enjoy the richness of the promises, let this never be forgotten. They can be made fully ours, only when our hearts are quick with a healthy spiritual life, and, of this, God, by his Spirit, is the one source. We must be born from above, to comprehend and appreciate the things of the heavenly world, or have a relish for communion with our Creator. Religion is only another word for the life of God in the soul of man—the ever-abiding presence, in the breast, of his gracious influences, which awake and support our higher nature. So entirely is this the teaching of the Scriptures, that the sum of all blessings to be received by the apostles, after the resurrection, is embodied in the one great “promise of the

Spirit." For this they were to wait; till this was given, they had not yet "received power from on high;" by this, they did all their mighty works, both in controlling nature by miracles, and in winning souls to Christ. And as with them, so with all believers. They are "the epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God." The character of a good man is explained as flowing from his being "full of the Holy Ghost." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." We "abound in hope" through his "power." We "are joined to the Lord" by being made, through the Spirit, "partakers of the divine nature." And as we are renewed by Him, so He keeps "that good thing which dwelleth in us," against the great day. He dwells in us, purifying and ennobling all our faculties; guiding us into all truth; giving us pure and lofty thoughts and affections, kindling our trust in God, warming our zeal, deepening our love, and sweetly leading us to realise that we have indeed received the adoption of sons, and may cry to the Eternal—Abba, Father! All the graces of the religious life, its love, its joy, its

peace, and whatever else makes the Christian, are the fruits of the Spirit. All goodness, righteousness, and truth, are anticipations of the higher state to come, wrought in us by Him. He teaches us how to pray; He enlightens the understanding; He brings to our remembrance, with deep insight into its fullness, what God has spoken in his word; He gives us "that anointing whereby we know all things" that relate to the hidden life. He is compared to fire which lightens darkness, melts hardness, warms, and cheers us—is the source of all power and motion, and that which purifies the dull ore and frees the shining gold. He is the *Comforter*, sent in Christ's stead, to revive our souls when they are faint, to support them in all their trials, and to fill them with heavenly joy, while they wait patiently for the full harvest of the promises, of which they have but the first-fruits here. He is the *earnest of our inheritance*, the seal to our title to its unclouded and abiding delights, and that not as the seal to a human covenant, by a mere outward impress, but by his moulding our whole nature into his own likeness. He is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting

life. He bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. He intercedes for us in heaven, helping the infirmities of our dark and worldly minds, which know not what to pray for as they ought,—taking our weak and faulty petitions, weak and faulty, alike in their dim apprehension, and in their faint unsteady pursuit, of spiritual good, and moulding them, when we “pray in Him,” so that Christ may present them with acceptance at the Throne of the Father. The Spirit himself, by, and in whom we pray, “maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered—groanings transcending all human comprehension or utterance—the pleading of God’s own heart in his people’s behalf.

If we would drink of the river of pleasure that flows for all in the promises, we must needs seek this heavenly Friend, Helper, Teacher, and Quickening Power. It was when he was in the Spirit that John saw the window opened in heaven, and when we are divinely raised above lower things by his indwelling fulness, we, too, see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off. It is surely the truest anticipation of heaven, to have



Him whose presence gives the eternal regions all their glory, make our souls his temple, filling them with his majesty. It is surely the sweetest anticipation of the full enjoyment of all the promises, to have Him as our own who is their source and giver.

How earnestly should we, therefore, take heed that we do not quench this blessed light within us! That we may do so is certain, else we should not be warned against the risk of it. Quench the Spirit! Our guide in darkness! Our hope, our life, our glory! Let us tremble at the thought of such a calamity. Do not "grieve" Him by whom you are "sealed until the day of redemption." If you do so, by sins or neglect, no promise can gladden you, for all the promises will have ceased to be yours. Do not "resist" Him, else He will turn away, and when He departs, the promises follow, as the sunbeams follow the sun. Do no "despite" to Him, else He will forsake you, and return to heaven. Do not "tempt" Him, else He will turn against you, and who can stand against this great God? Walk humbly, seek communion with Him, ask, knock, seek, day by day, and He will keep you from falling. Think

of those who “rebelled, and vexed” Him, so that He “turned to be their enemy”—what peace could the promises speak to them? What hope of salvation and heaven could they have, however rich these promises to others? Walk in the Spirit that you may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Sow to the Spirit that you may of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Let the Spirit of glory and of God dwell in you richly.

### PRAYER.

ETERNAL Spirit who didst change the darkness of the beginning into the light and beauty which Thine own lips pronounced “very good”—take my dark soul and make it light in Thyself. Be Thou my guide, my sanctifier, my strength, my song. Lead me into the land of uprightness. I am but a feeble, foolish, erring child; take Thou my soul in Thy gracious keeping and guide me to Thine everlasting glory. Through Christ. Amen.

JESUS, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast ;  
But sweeter far, Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find,  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Saviour of mankind.

Oh ! hope of every contrite heart ;  
Oh ! joy of all the meek ;  
To those who fall, how kind Thou art,  
How kind to those who seek !

But what to those who find ? Ah ! this  
Nor tongue nor pen can show ;  
The love of Jesus, what it is,  
None but his loved ones know.

BERNARD. A.D. 1091—1153.

XVIII.

Welcome, Sweet Light!

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform ;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up his vast designs,  
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for his grace ;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour ;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain ;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

COWPER.

## XVIII.

### WELCOME, SWEET LIGHT!

**I**T was a fine custom in antiquity to welcome the first dawning of the morning with the salutation, "Welcome, sweet light!" So, to this day, in some countries, the first rays of the sun find all astir, ready to turn their faces to his brightness, and meet it with grateful worship. In northern climates, where, for months, there is only a gloomy twilight at the best, they count the hours till the day reappear, and have watchers on the hills to catch the first glow of its approach, and pass the glad news to the waiting multitudes below. A lesson this in higher things, the first dawns of which should surely meet as glad a welcome. If we would get much from God, we must learn to be grateful for the faintest morning twilight of comfort. We often hinder the bestowment of great mercies by undervaluing

those we have already received. God does not grant us the full riches of his promises at once, but imparts them by degrees, as we are able to bear them, as a mother gives her child only the gentle nourishment of her bosom at first, because of its weakness, but, by-and-by, lets it have stronger food, as its strength increases. Our unbelieving and misgiving hearts murmur too often at such delays. We cannot trust Him when we see only small beginnings, and we look at the dark side instead of the bright. In times of trial a ray of returning comfort will not content us. We refuse to wait patiently while any trouble remains, and thus not seldom prevent our consolation abounding as it presently would have done. Even when our sky is mostly clear, a speck of cloud awakes more complainings than the wide azure spaces call forth thanks. If we would but look at what we have, how often would the joy be so full as to efface any thought of what is as yet withheld, and thus fit us for the receiving it as well!

It is the way with God to make his goodness known by a slow and often unperceived approach and increase. "His going forth is

prepared as the morning," which comes at first by faint and doubtful advances, the deep blue of night passing insensibly into the paleness of the dawn, and that, in its turn, kindling, as silently, into the gold and crimson of sunrise. First, it touches the upper clouds, and tops of the loftiest mountains, while as yet it is dark in the valleys; they, at the last, waking into day when the sun has climbed above the eastern hills. God's favour often breaks on us without our perceiving its first beginnings. In times of trouble we do not at once see his purpose; but as time passes, the cloud that was so depressing and gloomy breaks and floats away, and, lo! the rainbow stretches itself across it as it leaves us! The sun, shining forth at evening, turns the clouds that have hidden him by day into braided whiteness or refulgent gold. When we have great losses, we repine as if it were only evil, and think ourselves justified in our murmurings. But, after a time we come, slowly but surely, if we be Christians, to feel that, from the very first, God has been better to us than we thought, and that what we fancied to be only evil was in reality a blessing in disguise. We want the winter to pass all at



once, and the autumn to give laden branches and yellow fields without the broken weather and long waiting that lie between. We forget that it is not that God withholds his comforts, but that we are not spiritual enough to lay hold on them. Our hearts lie buried in vapours and mists of worldly sin and frailty, through which only a dim light reaches us, though, all the while, the full brightness of the sun shines overhead. It is thus with us in all things. If the cares of life try us, we let them disturb our confidence in God, and then wonder they are not removed at once. We forget that patience to bear may be what is best for us, and think ourselves hardly dealt with. When we first turn to a religious life, we expect the full joy and assurance that can only be reached by the "man, in Christ Jesus." If our feelings grow less ecstatic, we begin to doubt if there be anything in religion at all, instead of holding fast by the promises, and learning their truth by our loving trust. In every sphere of our life it has come to be, in effect, our creed, that "man never is, but always *to be* blest," and we slight what we have, in our yearning for what we have not. Common

mercies are forgotten and undervalued. If we would only take a lesson from the humblest of God's creatures, how much might we learn! The flower in the dark and sunless window puts forth its leaves even if it have not light enough to flower. The caged bird sings as sweetly in a gloomy street as if it were over wide fields of corn, in the sunny country, and some even sing most joyously in the dark. God loves the thankful, trusting heart, and gives it more for which to be grateful. To such, He speaks as Christ did to Nathanael: "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." The field that drinks in the rain has the fulness of the harvest in due season, but that which turns off the shower from its flinty bosom remains barren. The prodigal was contented if he were only made a servant in his father's house, but his humility brought him the ring on his finger, and the best robe, instead of his rags. To complain, only deepens our troubles: to think of the comforts we have in the midst of them, takes off half their weight. I have known a poor bedridden

creature so full of thankfulness for mercies she still enjoyed, that her whole life was a steady, clear-burning joy that made you forget her afflictions in the calm serenity of her spirit. Was it a wonder that the promises were thus fulfilled, in this perfect peace, or that she felt her rich reward as they never do who fret and repine? If you are not always on the mount with Christ, be thankful that He is still with you in the valley below, and if you have cares and troubles, as all men have, be thankful for the good hope of a better world where they will be for ever unknown. If we could only think of ourselves as we should, we would rather wonder that we have any favours from God at all, than that we have chastening, at times, and many mercies continually. If we only thanked Him duly for the crumbs that fall from his table to us, when things are darkest, we should soon have reason to praise his name for being made to sit at his board.

#### PRAYER.

BLESSED God, whose least gifts are far above our deserts, teach me to have at all times a

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thankful heart, to praise Thee for Thy gifts. If Thou chastenest me, may I kiss the rod, and feel that Thou smitest in love, for my profit, and if Thou fillest my cup with good things, may I ever give Thee the glory, that, learning, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content, I may have that peace which Thou givest only to Thine own. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

FAR from mankind, my weary soul, retire,  
Still follow truth, contentment still desire.  
Who climbs on high, at best his weakness shows,  
Who rolls in riches, all to fortune owes.  
Read well thyself, and mark thy early ways,  
Vain is the muse, and envy waits on praise.

Wavering as winds the breath of fortune blows,  
No power can turn it, and no prayers compose ;  
Deep in some hermit's solitary cell  
Repose, and ease, and contemplation dwell.  
Let conscience guide thee in the days of need ;  
Judge well thy own, and then thy neighbour's deed.

What heaven bestows, with thankfulness receive ;  
First ask thy heart, and then through faith believe.  
Slowly we wander o'er a toilsome way,  
Shadows of life and pilgrims of a day.  
"Who, restless in this world, receives a fall,  
Look up on high, and thank thy God for all!"

CHAUCER. 1328—1400.

XIX.

Heart Relief.

WAKE, awake ! for night is flying  
The watchmen on the heights are crying  
Awake, Jerusalem ! at last !  
Midnight hears the welcome voices,  
And at the thrilling cry rejoices :  
Come forth, ye virgins, night is past !  
The Bridegroom comes, awake !  
Your lamps with gladness take :  
Hallelujah !  
And for his marriage feast prepare,  
For ye must go to meet Him there.

Zion hears the watchmen singing,  
And all her heart with joy is springing,  
She wakes, she rises from her gloom ;  
For her Lord comes down, all glorious,  
The strong in grace, in truth victorious,  
Her star is risen, her light is come !  
Ah ! come, Thou blessed Lord !  
O Jesus, Son of God,  
Hallelujah !

We follow till the halls we see,  
Where Thou hast bid us sup with Thee.

Now let all the heavens adore Thee,  
And men and angels sing before Thee,  
With harp and cymbal's clearest tone :  
Of one pearl each shining portal,—  
Where we are with the choir immortal  
Of angels round Thy dazzling Throne ;  
Nor eye hath seen, nor ear  
Hath yet attained to hear  
What, there, is ours ;  
But we rejoice, and sing to Thee  
Our hymn of joy eternally.

NICOLAI. 1556—1608.

## XIX.


### HEART RELIEF.

NOTHING is more common than for men to speak of themselves as Christians, whose whole claim to be so seems to lie in their assuming the name. They show no characteristics of such a supreme love of religious things, and devotion to them, as the New Testament lays down as the sign of a true Christian ; and would not be suspected of any leaning that way, but from their own words. The confusion rises from a misapprehension of the nature and requirements of the gospel, which are such that a mere assent to its truth counts for nothing. If it were only a set of abstract doctrines no more could be needed than to treat them as we do anything else that has no practical bearing ; but it is very much more, for its facts and doctrines, alike, are intended to mould our heart and life. Its



whole design is to win the soul to new and higher affections, by which our former notions and principles will be so fundamentally changed, that, in the words of St. Paul, we shall be "new creatures" in Christ Jesus. The will is to get a new spring of action; the breast, a new law; our moral nature is to be revolutionised in its governing principles. An empty acknowledgment of its claims is thus of no value, nor is anything, short of such a sincere belief as makes it, henceforth, the vital power in our lives.

That it must be so cannot but follow from its addressing the heart as well as the understanding. It speaks to our conscience, and not to our intellect only, and must be weighed and responded to by our spiritual faculties, as well as by those of the mind. Its highest evidences appeal to the heart, for it claims to meet its wants, and to win it to goodness by setting before it an image of faultless perfection. But it is the province of the heart alone, to feel and judge, in right and wrong; in good and evil; it, alone, decides on conduct and character; on true and false in morals. The approval or dissent of conscience stamps



an action or rule of life with our aversion or favour. The soul has eyes as well as the mind or the body; the soul's, to search and judge in all details of higher truth; the mind's, in things of the intellect only. The soul loves or loathes; the mind sits as an impassive judge, in things indifferent. Truth finds its natural home in the breast; the brain has to do with external facts only.

Hence Christianity, which offers a love that passes knowledge, can only be received aright when it takes deep hold on our affections. The better life to which it seeks to introduce us, is only possible to those who are moved by the love of Christ towards us, and constrained by it to seek his pleasure before their own. There must be a new affection to expel the old; a higher, to efface the attractions of our former course, and substitute the nobler aims which Christ reveals. For love is the imperial power in man; where she leads, our being follows, with all its faculties of mind and spirit. They are but the ministers that stand and wait her bidding, round her throne. Love alone sways us as she wills; love alone is sovereign mistress of our nature. That Christianity

should claim it, makes a mere assent to her demands an empty mockery; she claims the man, that is, she claims his heart.

No wonder, then, that Paul has said that "with the heart, man believes." Less than this would leave us unaffected in our lives and conduct, which it is the great object of religion to raise to a heavenly standard. Less than this would leave us careless of the lofty pattern set before us, for our imitation, in the life and words of Christ himself. Less than this would leave the holiness He makes our law, unhonoured and contemned. But the heart, touched with the beauty of the Saviour's character, and kindled by the pure and lofty rules He gives us, subdued, besides, by his dying pity,—“believes to righteousness;” that is—puts in practice what it has learned to love, and follows Him forthwith and for ever.

If we would get the benefits of the promises, such a faith must be ours. Instances abound in Scripture of a merely intellectual assent, which counted nothing. Simon Magus is said to have believed, and yet St. Peter tells him, he is “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Of the multitude of Christ's

disciples, many turned back and went no more with Him. The foolish virgins went far in their waiting for the bridegroom ; they took lamps to meet him, and kept them burning for a season, and yet, at his coming, the door was shut against them. The converts of Asia forsook St. Paul in a body, and many others ran well for a time, but presently were "hindered." Not every one that says "Lord, Lord,"—owning Christ with the lips, shall enter into the kingdom, but only those who "do his Father's will." The heart must have been stirred so deeply as to colour the whole future life.

The different phrases used for what is demanded from us, enforces this. We are to "roll our burden on the Lord ;" to "stay ourselves upon Him ;" to "trust in Him ;" "to come to Him" and to "receive Him"—expressions which imply a deep and hearty turning of the whole soul, and shut out the thought of any mere profession. The one is the form, the other the living power of faith. It is the same in lower things. We cannot rightly say a man believes himself in danger if he takes no steps to flee from it, nor that he trusts our word that we will meet his wants, if he still

fret and mourn as if it were worthless. So, with the sinner and the promises. It is to trifle with himself for any one to say that he believes that Christ died to reconcile sinners to God, and that having risen from the dead He has ascended up on high, and lives for ever, to make intercession for them, unless, with the profession of belief, he join a frank reliance upon Him for his salvation, and cast himself into the arms of his free mercy for pardon. Nor can he be assured that he has done so if his heart and mind remain unchanged by such amazing goodness. If he feel it, he must needs exhibit the results, in living to Him to whom he owes his eternal happiness. If a plant could speak could we credit it that it was living, if it showed no signs, in leaf, or bud, or flower? The dead look like the living for a time; but if the pulse and breast are still, and every other power and motion wanting, we feel that they are but the outward forms of men. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," says Christ, "He it is that loveth me." A nominal Christianity is no Christianity at all.

If then you wish to enjoy the promises, see

that they have a place in your heart. Take them as the sure words of one that cannot lie. When Christ speaks, let your soul answer. Make his words your living trust, as no less worthy your reliance than if He had fulfilled them already. See that you can say with St. Paul—"I know Him in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He will keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day." See that you can say with St. Peter—"Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls."

Reader, is such a loving trust yours?

GIVE me my scallop shell of quiet,  
My staff of truth to walk upon ;  
My scrip of joy—immortal diet,  
My bottle of salvation ;  
My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;  
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage—  
While my soul, like a quiet palmer,  
Travelleth toward the land of heaven.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH. 1552—1618.

XX.

*The Morning Light.*

N



Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,—  
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings within, and fears without,  
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, healing, riches of the mind,  
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—Thou wilt receive;  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down;  
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come!

## XX.

### THE MORNING LIGHT.

**M**ANY worthy Christians are sorely troubled by a fear that they have no right to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel, because they cannot speak as they hear some do, of the painful struggles through which they have passed in their early religious course. They seem to think that the only way of coming to Christ is like that of the child in St. Luke, whom the devil threw down and tore, as he was being led to the Saviour. They read such stories as that of Bunyan, about his terrible spiritual conflict and anguish, before he found peace with God, and fancy that, like him, they must fight Apollyon in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, before they have a claim to take comfort as believers. But they forget the opposite experience of such as Richard Baxter, who was for a long time distressed that

he had never had such agonizing and humiliating views of his sinfulness as some others, but at last came to thank God for it, as a consequence of his having been early and insensibly led to religion from his very childhood. If we look well at it, there seems rather a ground for reproach, in the supposed necessity for such violent and heart-rending grief, as flows from a sudden conversion in ripe years. It speaks of a life of sin or indifference, and of strong habits of evil, to abandon which racks our whole nature. Surely, they who are brought up religiously, ought to be so inclined, from their first years, to the ways of God, as to pass insensibly from the faint beginnings of Christian life, thus shown, to a full and deliberate realisation of it in their riper days. Why should not spiritual life be the counterpart of natural? Both are of God, and there is nothing to hinder both from being equally steadfast in their development. We see such an equal and unmarked transition into true and eminent religiousness in the case of many children. They can never in after-years tell when they did not think seriously, and in their own simple way seek after God. Like Samuel, they were his from the

birth, and ministered before Him while still very young. It is a sad defect in our notions, to take for granted, as we too often do, that our life, up to opening manhood, must be spent without loving communion with God, and that we can only then begin, by what we call conversion, to live to Him in whom we ought to live from infancy. Christian education should strive that the soul, from the beginning, should grow up a plant of grace, budding and shooting higher, each year, till, in mature life, it comes to a strong and natural flowering.

That there are some who thus begin life with God is, however, a proof that those err who fancy that they cannot be Christians without a violent struggle of heart. The grace of God must, indeed, quicken us to a divine life, in every case, but there is no necessity for its being delayed till we have loaded ourselves with the guilt of sinful years, and are bowed down with the weight of reproach. Why should we not so begin our days, as never to be able to feel as they must do, who have given the flower of their life to the service of Satan? The little children whose spirits are before the face of their Father in heaven, could never

violent emotions and sudden changes of feeling and life must be unfounded. The day comes so insensibly that no one can tell, from mere observation, when it begins. There is no sound of the light's approach, nor any swift and arresting contrasts of darkness and day, but a slow fading of night before the gradual brightness. The day-star rises often unnoticed, and only attracts us when it has already been some time shining. It is the same with the soul. God brings most men by unperceived steps to the final issue of clear and confirmed decision. Many impressions and convictions are felt, and yet hardly allowed their full influence, though they steadily weaken our sinful tastes, and prepare us for yielding at last. Whether the change be marked or unnoticed depends much on the man. Some are more easily raised and depressed than others: a few are ready to rise into ecstasies under any joyful excitement, but the mass are not so strongly emotional, and, even in religion, are half unconscious of the revolution in their natures, brought about by their decision for God. The best, and only safe way, for any one to know whether he be a Christian or not, is by asking

himself, if he have finally and deliberately chosen a Christian life. If he feel that he has answered Christ's invitation to follow Him, by a joyous assent, he will have immediate proof of his sincerity by his gladly devoting himself to the first duty that comes in his way. New principles beget new action, and, henceforth, his controlling desire will be to please and honour his Master in all things. But he may be long at work for Christ without realising that he is a Christian; he may be bearing fruit meet for repentance, and yet fear he has never repented, because of his coming so gently to a healthier mind. It is not the amount of our humiliation or of our anguish, but its sincerity, that decides. If you have been led to turn from self-righteous pride, and cast yourself heartily on Christ, with a settled resolution to cleave only to Him, and if you have the consciousness of this in your desire to serve Him in spirit as well as act, in your daily sphere, you have the right to take all the promises as intended for you. Christian joy may be late of coming, but it is not our joy that makes us Christians, it is our first saying, from the depths of the soul, "Lord, I am thine!"

Look how the flower which ling'ringly doth fade,  
The morning's darling, late the summer's queen,  
Spoil'd of that juice which kept it fresh and green,  
As high as it did raise, bows low the head :  
Just so, the pleasures of my life being dead,  
Or in their contraries but only seen,  
With swifter speed declines than erst it spread,  
And, blasted, scarce now shows what it hath been.  
Therefore, as doth the pilgrim, whom the night  
Hastes darkly to imprison on its way,  
Think of thy home, my soul, and think aright—  
Of what's yet left thee of life's wasting day :  
Thy sun posts westward, passed is thy morn,  
And twice it is not given thee to be born.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND. 1585—1649.

**XXI.**

**Some Mistakes.**



JESUS, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the billows near me roll,  
While the tempest still is high :  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past,  
Safe into the haven guide ;  
O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none—  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee ;  
Leave, ah ! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me ;  
All my trust on Thee is stayed,  
All my help from Thee I bring ;  
Cover my defenceless head  
With the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,  
Boundless love in Thee I find.  
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,  
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.  
Just and holy is Thy name,  
I am all unrighteousness ;  
Vile and full of sin I am—  
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found—  
Grace to pardon all my sin ;  
Let the healing streams abound,  
Make and keep me pure within ;  
Thou of life the fountain art,  
Freely let me take of Thee ;  
Spring Thou up within my heart,  
Rise to all eternity.

C. WESLEY.

## XXI.

### SOME MISTAKES.

THE clouds and darkness that are about God's ways, in his dealings with men, lead often to rash and unwarranted conclusions, even with true Christians, as to his favour or supposed displeasure. We are so accustomed to measure our own good-will to others by our wish to benefit them in outward affairs, that we use the same standard with the dealings of God towards ourselves. Nothing has been a greater stumbling-block to his people in every age than the worldly prosperity of the irreligious and the wicked ; and nothing is more apt to be taken as proof of his approval of our own ways and state, than the success of our affairs. No reasoning could be more unsound : against none have we more cause to guard. Success in worldly matters is no ground whatever, for supposing we are specially under his smile,

unless it be joined with a clear evidence that it has come to us in the way of his promises. His ways are in the thick darkness, but his words are clear and beyond question. So far as they go, we may speak of his thoughts towards us, but it will sorely mislead us if we think we can trace his heart by his hand. Success is the devil's argument for the goodness of a man's ways, and has been pleaded by every age, in turn, to vindicate what God must most utterly condemn. It was constantly advanced by the Romans as a proof that their gross and debasing idolatry was divinely sanctioned and rewarded, that they carried their eagles over every land, and had such an empire as the world had never seen before. It is pleaded by the Roman Catholic Church as a convincing proof that it is the one true communion, that God gives it such numbers of converts in every part of the earth. It was the Pharisees' argument urged by Gamaliel, by which the truth of Christianity should be established or its falsity exposed, that its success or comparative failure should be noted, as if it had not been certain, that evil has always had the majority, and as if the sincere followers of God had not

always, to use the Bible figure, been like a little flock of kids, while his enemies covered all the land. Prosperity comes to the bad as well as to the good; oftener, indeed, to the former, for they can take ways to secure it from which the others shrink. The sun shines equally on the brambles of the wilderness and the fruits of the orchard, and the snow and hail fall on the garden as heavily as on the barren waste. It is one of the mysteries of God's government that evil often succeeds when good fails, and that, in general, there seems but little connection between a man's character and his worldly condition.

Godliness has, indeed, the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, from the virtues it creates or fosters, and from the assurance of blessings from God on his faithful servants. But advancement in the world depends upon much besides character. A man's abilities, his prudence, his industry, his opportunities, which include the influence of birth, connections, services of friends, and contingencies of events, carry success with them, even if much that goes to make up goodness be wanting. Other things being

equal, the fear of God gives the advantage in the struggle of life. By forming such principles as secure confidence and respect, but it is not intended that it should supersede the worth of our natural endowments, or their wise and diligent cultivation and use, else it would be premium on idleness and stupidity, and would make the noblest gifts of the intellect of no worth. A man may, moreover, have some characteristics of a Christian without being one in all respects—he may be truthful, honest, industrious, charitable, a good citizen and a honourable man of business, and these elements of religion may carry the blessing of prosperity with them, though he want the higher attainment of true humility before God and trust in the Saviour, which would secure an interest in the world to come as well as in the good things of this. Besides, a bad man can hardly be said to succeed even when, apparently, most successful, for a curse goes with all his wealth—the worst curse of all, the war of self-approval, or the being satisfied with mere material good. After all, character, with fitting application and ability, carries the day as a rule, and no one feels that it is any pro-

to the contrary when want of principle for a moment steals a march on it, and snatches the prize. Time, that tries all things, brings intelligent worth to the front, and destroys the unscrupulous. But piety will not serve the sailor instead of a knowledge of navigation, nor will the stupid man of business find his religion serve him instead of brightness in his calling. We might as well think that it will supply the want of eyes to the blind or of feet to the lame. One set of God's laws do not run counter to the other; they are all in harmony. They strengthen but do not supersede one another. It is equally a mistake to take success as an index of piety, or a want of it as a proof of its absence.

Were it otherwise, how fatal would it be to our highest welfare! for what greater ruin could be wrought in religion than to make it the sure source of worldly advantage? Bribed and corrupted by such attractions of interest, it would be sought for the loaves and fishes, instead of its higher charms, and, sinking to mere mercenary selfishness, would die out of the world. God has wisely left the promises

equal, the fear of God gives to the struggle of life, by forming a secure confidence and must not be intended that it should blindly plans and of our natural endowments with God. He diligent cultivation but He must do so premium on idleness, general laws; and if some make the no part in the machinery of success, worth. A man our misfortune, or blame our characterist but have no reason to think God all responsible for us. Nor is success always greatest dust we get what we wish. The Israelites b not the desire of their hearts, but had leanness sent into their souls. It looked as if Joseph had been utterly forsaken when he lay, first in the pit, and then in the prison; but if either had been omitted he would never have been ruler of Egypt. Moses spent many years as a shepherd, in Midian, a most ungenial and humbling lot for one who had been trained in all the wisdom of Egypt; but if he had not been forced into this solitude, he would never have been a lawgiver and leader to his people. The scheme of deliverance, and the body of laws he provided for the new-born nation, bear the impress of long meditation, such as only

nt could yield. The artist effaces much  
k advances, to put something better  
though, for the time, it look as  
destroying instead of creating, the  
d, shows the reason for all he  
ur lives may seem disfigured and  
oy failures and blots, but He in whose  
ads they are knows what is best, and works  
by a plan which will show His wisdom when  
finished. If our own fault, or position, or  
temper of heart, make it needful or best that  
we have little of earth, we may have more of  
heaven, if we bear our trials rightly. The  
soul may prosper all the more, for being tried,  
like gold, in the fire.

Take care, then, not to think yourself specially good if specially fortunate, or specially under the frown of God if your lot be clouded. To do the one, is to build up self-righteousness, and form false judgments as to God and yourself; to do the other, is to create distress that He does not intend. Keep your eyes on the promises, and rest in them, thanking God if you are enabled to live so as to draw down their fulfilment here, but guarding against light conclusions that you have done so by any



outward favours received. After all, He thinks little of time, which is so much to us, and lays the stress of his purpose on our life hereafter. If He give us both worlds, it is well, but a false belief in his approval, from prosperity here, may rob us of unspeakably greater in heaven, and a desponding fear, from present misfortunes, may hinder our finding the benefit they are designed to secure us.

Whate'er Thy providence denies,  
I calmly would resign,  
For Thou art good, and just, and wise ;  
O bend my will to Thine.

Whate'er Thy sacred will ordains,  
O give me strength to bear ;  
And let me know my Father reigns,  
And trust his tender care.

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Whether, then, in want or wealth,  
Joy or sorrow, pain or health,  
Still our prayer shall be the same :  
Father, hallowed be Thy name.

XXII.

**The Whole Counsel of God.**

My God, my Father, while I stray  
Far from my home, in life's rough way,  
O teach me from my heart to say—  
Thy will be done!

If Thou should'st call me to resign  
What most I prize—it ne'er was mine;  
I only yield Thee what is Thine;  
Thy will be done!

E'en if again I ne'er should see  
The friend more dear than life to me,  
Ere long we both shall be with Thee;  
Thy will be done!

Should pining sickness waste away  
My life in premature decay,  
My Father, still I strive to say—  
Thy will be done!

If but my fainting heart be blest  
With Thy sweet Spirit for its guest,  
My God, to Thee I leave the rest;  
Thy will be done!

Renew my will from day to day;  
Blend it with Thine, and take away  
All that now makes it hard to say—  
Thy will be done!

Then, when on earth I breathe no more  
The prayer oft mixed with tears before,  
I'll say upon a happier shore—  
Thy will be done!


ELLIOTT.

## XXII.

### THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

NOT a few of the mistakes men make in religious matters rise from a habit of fixing upon some favourite promises, to the exclusion of others which might temper their hopes, and direct their conduct, by added conditions and counsels. They fasten on some passages which meet their tastes, and keep them as an abiding solace and support, while others, which are needed to give breadth and fulness to the selected few, are left unheeded. The consequence is that they often rest in a false comfort, and think themselves justified in claiming the promises, when a wider view of the whole counsel of God would show them that there is much awanting before they can safely do so. Take, for example, the ground of hope with many, in view of eternity; that turning - point of our destiny. Such an

answer as that given by St. Paul to the jailor at Philippi, in reply to the question—"What must I do to be saved?"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is taken as an assurance that all that is demanded is an assent to the great truth that Christ is the one Saviour of sinners. But if a wider range of Scripture were examined, it would show that the same question, asked at different times, received at, each, a different answer, suited to each special case. Thus, John the Baptist tells the multitude when they put it to him—to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," adding, as an illustration, to some, one, to others, another specific injunction. He warns the publicans that they must exact no more than that which was appointed them. When the soldiers ask him what they must do, he answers—"Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." The multitude have, for their command—"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Each class is required to show their sincerity by some practical proof of a new unselfish spirit which



could resist the temptation most natural to them. It is as if he had said—"If you wish to show that you have repented, and are new men, apply some test, and let it be such as will prove that you have overcome your most common sin." The young man who asked Christ—"What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" was answered—"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" and when he showed that he had no just idea of what this involved, it was added—"Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Christ saw his besetting weakness—a greater love for earthly wealth than was right—and tries him by requiring his giving it up. To Nicodemus, who, though a "ruler," had merely ceremonial ideas of religious life, He defines the condition of being saved as the "being born again." To the people, who were always doubting his commission and claims, He says—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." The lawyer, on the other hand, with no higher than legal views of duty, is told in answer to the question—"What good thing shall I do

to inherit eternal life?"—that he must keep the commandments.

It is certain that there can be no contradiction in these different statements. They convincingly show that salvation does not depend on our convictions alone, however just and intelligent, and that belief is only of value when it is the active principle of a new life; the quickening germ of a spiritual revolution. They show that it must be such a belief as flows from our being born again of the Holy Spirit from above, and as leads to the fruits in our daily life, and in our deepest affections, befitting a Christian. They throw discredit on our trusting mere hasty utterances made under excitement, and require that the heart and actions be weighed, as well as our words, before we can safely think ourselves heirs of heaven. Reliance on forms and ceremonies, or on outward compliance with duties and observances, is equally set aside, by the requirements of love towards God and our neighbour. The lawyer, whom Christ found wanting in the very essence of religion, could have cleared himself of any shortcoming in mere ceremonial correctness, and perhaps, in good

measure as regarded a pure moral life. Like Paul, he was very probably blameless "touching the righteousness which is of the law." But the Bible defines religion as a principle in the soul, not the merely doing virtuous acts, though it strictly demands them as the necessary results of the living principle within us. The spirit in which acts are done, and not the mere acts themselves, counts with God. As Paul says, a man may die as a martyr, or give up all his goods to the poor, and yet be regarded as without the vital soul of religion, by Him who looks not at the outward appearance, but at the heart.

The one thought underlying the different replies, with all their varied requirements, is the need of a practical test of the reality of our professions, by our life. Each question is answered by a demand for that which in the special case is the best gauge of the heart. If the publicans were sincere in their repentance, they could not fail to abandon their ruling sin of extortion; if the soldiers were so, they would without question cease from the lawless violence too frequent among them, would accuse no one falsely, would be content with



their pay, and not mutiny, as was so common in that day. Each would give up the prevailing sins of his class, which had become so much a matter of course, that the moral courage which could dare to be singular, on the side of right, and the sensitiveness that could see and feel the evil of what their fellows defended as justifiable, because it was done by all, would be enough to show the power of a new moral life in their hearts. Earnestness that could stand out from its neighbours, and dare to do right from its own convictions, in the face of men, could only spring from a radical change of feeling, and might be taken as a proof that the professions made were no passing impulse, but a lasting principle. The lawyer, self-sufficient in his strict observance of the teachings of his Church, was humbled by being told that all he did was nothing, if it did not spring from a reverend love of God. Despising others as not so holy as himself, he was told that one test of holiness was his loving instead of contemning them. Looking at religion as distinct from the affections, he was reminded that its seat is in the heart alone. The young man's fancied love of

God and heaven above all things besides, gets a rude shock when he is asked to weigh it against the loss of his great possessions. He thought that his heart was set on God, but found when Christ had probed it, that there was something he held still dearer. It was as if he had been told—"Profession, though illustrated by a life so pure as to win my love, is yet too little, while one detail of self-sacrifice is awanting." We must be ready to do whatever is asked by God if He is to accept us.

What is implied in the words "Only believe," is seen in the light thus cast on them by the Saviour and his inspired servants. It is only when we ponder all the answers given, that we know how much it needs to warrant our assurance that we are truly safe. The words to the jailor were measured by his state of mind, and included as much as those used to others, though no special tests were needed from one who showed so humble and tender a spirit. Faith, repentance, and the new birth are so many ways of stating the same act of lowly self-surrender that God requires : we must repent, and we must believe ;

but the outward proof that we have done so must also be shown in our daily life.

Yet, let no one be discouraged by the standard thus set up, as if he must despair when he thinks of his hopelessness to attain it. Christ looks at the spirit, not at the performance only, and bears the burden for us when He sees us try to carry it. His perfect holiness atones for our shortcomings. He is our propitiation. We are accepted in Him. He becomes our righteousness. As the dark body of the sun is hidden beneath the robe of light around it, the sinner's vileness is covered by the spotless glory of the Saviour's merits. What we would fain have done is taken as if we had done it. Our earnest, humble, efforts towards God are looked upon with a Father's eyes, and we are owned as babes in Christ if not perfect men.

To return to the thought with which I opened ; take heed that you read the promises in their fulness before you call them yours. Each throws a light on all the rest ; but one or more, chosen because they please us, may mislead. As it takes all the rays of the sun-beam to make up the perfect light, it needs the

mingled brightness of all the promises to shed on our souls the clear glory of the divine plan of salvation.

### PRAYER.

O THOU who fillest heaven and earth with Thine unsleeping, boundless goodness; who not only proclaimest in words Thy glory, but manifestest all Thy perfections in Thy constant working, in all things, always, and requirest us, like Thyself, to prove our heart by our acts—help me, by Thy Spirit, to add to my confession of the lips, the honour of steadfast obedience in act and heart, that I may become daily more like the blessed who stand before Thee. Grant it, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE dove let loose in eastern skies,  
When hast'ning fondly home,  
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies  
Where idler warblers roam.

But high she shoots through air and light,  
Above all low delay,  
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,  
Nor shadow dims her way.

So grant me, God, from every care,  
And stain of passion free,  
Aloft, through virtue's purer air,  
To hold my course to Thee!

No sin to cloud, no lure to stay  
My soul, as home she springs ;  
Thy sunshine on her joyful way,  
Thy freedom on her wings !

MOORE.

XXIII.

Not Faithless, but Believing.

THAT mystic word of Thine, O sovereign Lord!  
Is all too pure, too high, too deep for me;  
Weary of striving, and with longing faint,  
I breathe it back again in prayer to Thee.

Abide in me,—o'ershadowed by Thy love,  
Each half-born purpose and dark thought of sin,  
Quench, ere it rise,—each selfish, low desire,  
And keep my soul as Thine—calm and divine.

As some rare perfume in a vase of clay,  
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own—  
So, when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul,  
All heaven's own sweetness seems around it thrown.

The soul alone, like a neglected harp,  
Grows out of tune, and needs that hand divine;  
Dwell Thou within it, tune and touch the chords,  
Till every note and string shall answer Thine.

Abide in me: there have been moments pure,  
When I have seen Thy face, and felt Thy power;  
Then evil lost its grasp, and passion, hushed,  
Owned the divine enchantment of the hour.

These were but seasons, beautiful and rare;  
Abide in me—and they shall ever be;  
I pray Thee now fulfil my earrest prayer,  
Come and abide in me, and I in Thee.

H. B. STOWE.

## XXIII.

### NOT FAITHLESS, BUT BELIEVING.

**W**AS there ever any one who was never troubled by doubts? There may have been, but it is far more common to have to wrestle with them than to escape them. To question is a constitutional tendency with not a few. They grope their way to conviction by restless inquiry after what they think the right. To blame them is to blame the laws of their nature, by which they must, necessarily, act. Some, like Nathanael, are able to believe on such simple evidence that even Christ takes notice of it, and promises "greater things than these;" others, like Thomas, need to touch the print of the nails before yielding, but, having had such proof, forthwith render an exceptionally earnest, lowly, and abiding homage, as to their Lord and their God. It is well when a childlike openness is ready to receive Him on



testimony, the perception of the strength of which implies a more than common moral sensibility; but it is still well when, after a struggle with the distrust of our lower nature, we come, even in the end, to cast in our lot with Him.

Our "evil heart of unbelief," as a rule, is constantly tempting us to doubt and discredit the promises. Unjust prejudices and cavils against God's word hinder us from a prompt submission to the Gospel, and are like to turn us, at times, against it. We listen to objections with a partial ear, cherish difficulties, and forget the inherent self-evidence of those words of comfort and support which at other times are so divine to us. We too often return a cold hesitancy to the invitations of religion, as if they were the fond, unfounded dreams of men. Looking abroad on life with gross and worldly thoughts, we ask ourselves, what good comes from the service of God; what benefit it brings to those who are most devoted? Because we do not see immediate outward profit from it, we excuse ourselves from yielding to it, by trying to think it a vain and empty delusion. Christ has said that his yoke is easy and his burden light, but we shrink from it as too heavy to

bear. The self-denial and lofty purity of thought demanded, seem a constraint too irksome to be endured. And even after we have resolved to follow Christ, the same doubts and distressing unbelief too often cloud our happiness, and lead us almost to give up our faith. We question our title to the blessings He has procured, and fear we are presumptuous intruders among his people, rather than of their number. The evidences on which we have built our hopes are fancied to be self-deceptions, rather than the sure words of Him who cannot lie. In times of trouble, when the sky is darkened, and the clouds return after the rain, everything seems to be baseless and depressing. Even long-faithful Christians are assaulted, at times, by the most terrible doubts and waverings. The very existence of God; trust in his providence; the value of Christ's work; the power of prayer; the very hope that there is a heaven, are darkly disputed in the thoughts. The troubled mind troubles the whole spirit; the ruffled waters of the soul give back no image of the sky. Promises on which it trusted with deep and holy joy at other times, fail to give comfort.

Might they not be as easily revoked as given? If God has not turned away from them, may they not have turned away from Him? May they not have lost an interest in his covenant? Many a heart is sorely tried by these suggestions; perhaps every heart in its turn. The only way to overcome them is to resolve that we will still cling to God,—that as we cannot be worse off even if they were well founded, we must be unspeakably the losers if they are baseless. Let us remember that the sun and the stars still shine, though overclouded for a time, and that if we but wait and trust, the doubts that hide eternal realities from us for the moment, will pass off, and reveal them once again.

It is impossible for us to solve the mystery of God's ways and plans by our own reason. It has its sphere, but it fails when it attempts to understand the deep secrets of his heart. He who tries, finds, like Asaph, that there is much in the everyday economy of life that is too painful for us, too profound for our understanding, and that we can get no rest for our souls till we go into God's sanctuary, and resign ourselves to Him. The heart unriddles

that the head cannot explain, and, in the end, leads us back to our first faith. How can it be, indeed, that with our limited faculties, we could hope to understand in its fulness what is a wonder to angels? As well try to follow the light up to its flaming source, as trace the rays of God to that awful glory from which they come forth. We stand too low to see the perfect circle of the plans of Providence; like men, who see in the rainbow, when they look down from the plain, only a bending arch, but could find it rounding into a perfect circle if they rose high enough up the mountain. Humility is the very life of devotion; pride wounds the eye and chills the heart.

“Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars  
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,  
Is reason to the soul : and as on high  
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,  
Not light us here ; so reason’s glimmering ray  
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
But guide us upward to a better day.  
And as those nightly tapers disappear  
When day’s bright lord ascends the hemisphere,  
So pale grows reason at religion’s sight ;  
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.”\*

Each of our spiritual disquiet rises from im-

\* Dryden’s “Religio Laici.”

patience. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that "we have need of patience, that, after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise." \* We want to be at the journey's end without the troubles of the way, but we cannot have this, even in common affairs, and should not expect it in the things of the soul. "The husbandman," says St. James, "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain;" "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts." The reward may be a throne, but the way to it is rough and long, and there is need of quiet strength to bear the delay, and toil, and suffering, by which alone it can be won. The day comes only after the night; the spring only after the winter, and heaven only after death. We may have God in the soul while here, but to behold his glory face to face, we must wait till the day break and the shadows flee away. Our groundless fears and the faintheartedness that droops at any denial of our wishes should be steadfastly discouraged. The heart that

\* Heb. x. 36.

trusts God does not look to the waves, but to Him who is walking over them to its help. It remembers how Peter trod them safely while he kept his eye on the Saviour, but presently sank when he turned from Him to look at the heaving waters. It is not the part of the Christian to count the billows that dash on his vessel, but rather, like a skilful pilot, to keep his hand on the helm, and his eye on heaven. After all, we are like the child who can row only unsteadily, and has to trust to the strong hand of its father who steers. He can and will guide us to the harbour which we neither see nor could reach ourselves. The head must give place to the deeper insight of the heart, and must be content to accept its assurance rather than its own speculations. The intellect looks at spiritual truth from outside, and often errs; the heart enters into its sanctuary and sees it in all its fulness.

The grand secret of an undoubting trust lies, thus, in the keeping our spiritual life in healthy vigour, and for this we must maintain a loving communion with God by prayer, and a healthful exercise of our souls in daily Christian activity. To do God's will is, ever, the certain

means of knowing that it is his will we do. Argument will only distract us; lowly prayer, and habitual charity, in thought and act, will keep us in perfect peace.

XXIV.

*The Only True Light.*



THOU, whose almighty word,  
Chaos and darkness heard,  
And took their flight ;  
Hear us, we humbly pray,  
And, where the Gospel's day  
Sheds not its glorious ray—  
Let there be light !

Thou, who didst come to bring  
On Thy redeeming wing  
Healing and sight,—  
Health to the sick in mind,  
Sight to the inly blind,  
O now, to all mankind,  
Let there be light !

Spirit of Truth and Love—  
Life-giving, holy Dove,  
Speed forth Thy flight ;  
Move on the water's face,  
Bearing the lamp of grace,  
And in earth's darkest place  
Let there be light !

Holy and blessed Three ;  
Glorious Trinity ;  
Wisdom ! Love ! Might !  
Boundless as ocean's tide,  
Rolling in fullest pride,  
Through the earth, far and wide,  
Let there be light !

MARRIOTT.

## XXIV.

### THE ONLY TRUE LIGHT.

EVERY one who has had much to do with the spiritual history of others must have observed how common it is to seek comfort and support from the promises, by fancied corroborations which have no warrant from God as evidence. The ordinary sources of consolation in dwelling on them are not enough: there must be some special revelation, by a voice, or light, or vision, before they can make them theirs, as if they would, like Naaman, dictate to God the mode in which He would heal them, and were fain to slight the instructions He has given, as too simple and commonplace. That the prophet should only have said, by his servant, "Go wash seven times in the Jordan," was very different from what he had expected. He had thought that some special and flattering means would have been

used, or that, at least, Elisha would himself have come out, and put his hand on the place, and called on the name of the Lord his God. Many Christians, only too like him, cannot content themselves with mere faith in the written promise as it stands in the Bible, and with the command to wrestle with God in prayer, and wait his time, but strike out thoughts of their own as to the grounds on which they should trust Him. If they can only have some sign, like the Jews, they will be satisfied; as if signs enough had not already been given in the gracious words He spoke, which, after all, were the greatest miracles vouchsafed to us by Him. They must have something new to strengthen their trust, forgetting that this is to treat what He has given us, in his infinite wisdom, as insufficient. They set more value on something outside the Scriptures than on all the heavenly treasures within.

A moment's reflection will show how dangerous and delusive such unwarranted dreams must be; how unsafe the comfort which some draw from them. One of the Fathers tells us of a great lady who wrote to him, under deep

trouble of soul that she would never be satisfied till he had received some revelation from heaven that she was saved. His answer was, that she asked a hard and useless favour ; hard, because he could not hope to have the secret counsels of God revealed to him ; useless, because he could not prove that what he might tell her had really come from above, and would thus only give her fresh ground for doubt and distress, when she came to question this fresh revelation, as she now did that of the written word. She could only have his word for it, and she would be safer to trust the apostles and prophets. So, when men fly to visions, revelations, voices from heaven and the like, do they not lean on their own fancies, instead of trusting the surer word of prophecy, to which St. Peter tells us we do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, till the day dawn and the daystar arise in our hearts? It may be more flattering to our vanity to think ourselves honoured by direct outward communications from God, but surely He knows what is best for us, when He has told us to trust in his word, and find in its sacred fulness the comfort and assurance we

crave. There is a striking sentence of Luther on this subject. "I have covenanted with the Lord," says he, "that He should not give me either visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am contented with this gift—that I have the Holy Scriptures, which abundantly teach and supply all things needful, whether for this life or for that to come."

To look to supposed revelations, directly given us, has a fatal tendency to make us think less of God's word than we ought, and to set special value on our own notions and fancies, which have no authority as a proof of our state. If we have a private correspondence with the Almighty, thus, why should we trouble ourselves much with what is only common and general, and so imperfect that it needs additions for each special case? If we think we have heard the immediate voice of the Spirit telling us that our sins are forgiven, or if we have gathered this from some apparition, or sign, or dream, we can afford to lay the Bible aside. How much more worthy of a religion addressed to intelligent creatures, to find the evidences of our interest in it from the results it produces in our hearts and lives; in

the graces it quickens; the light it kindles; the comfort it sheds! The best proof of love is ever obedience; the best proof of faith is sincere dependence; the best proof of being in Christ must be his image in us. No vision or revelation can testify to our being influenced by the truth; they are things of the senses, and speak nothing as to the state of the heart, and thus they lead to the deadly mistake of making religion independent of our life and thoughts, and distinct from them. If these be right, such communications are needless; if they be wrong, they are only delusions.

That they are deceitful is only too certain. I have known persons speak of hearing voices, of seeing lights, of having Christ hanging on the cross, in their breast, for days together, visible to their inner sight, though there was no sign, in their daily bearing, that his Spirit had changed their hearts. President Edwards tells us the same of the great revivals of his day, and the experience of all who have watched such things supports him. Nervous excitement, in religious matters, however produced, continually tends to such distempered fancies, and dangerous, epidemic fervours.

History is full of illustrations of wild irregular outbursts of such superstition, in all countries and ages. Men think the disorderly dreams of their own minds a warrant from heaven for acts which the Bible condemns. Sometimes it takes a political turn, and leads to a cruel fanaticism; at others it leads to the most unbecoming and extravagant follies. There is no doubt that the Spirit of God dwells in believers, but He acts on us by throwing light on his word, not as a substitute for it, far less as a guide and counsellor in speculative opinions. It is enough to settle the whole question that we think what the result would be if every one were to fancy he had a private revelation of his state before God, and of his duty. It would be impossible to distinguish between heated imagination and true messages from heaven, and every freak and extravagance, of thought and action, would claim a divine warrant. It was not without reason that one said, "I had rather see the real impressions of a god-like nature on my own soul than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me that my name was entered in the Book of Life." The vision and the angel visit might be fond illu-

sions of our own creating, but there could be no mistake when we could see in our own hearts the seal of God's favour, by the graces He had himself implanted. Such graces need only look into the sacred writings to find that they require no outward corroboration, but, in themselves, justify him who enjoys them in appropriating the whole fulness of the promises, of which he has thus evidently received the earnest. A change of heart is already the dawn of glory; and the dawn never comes without the day following apace.



THIS world is all a fleeting show,  
For man's illusion given :  
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,  
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow ;  
There's nothing true but heaven !

And false the light on glory's plume  
As fading hues of even ;  
And love, and hope, and beauty's bloom,  
Are blossoms gather'd for the tomb—  
There's nothing bright but heaven !

Poor wanderers of a stormy day,  
From wave to wave we're driven !  
And fancy's flash, and reason's ray,  
Serve but to light the troubled way—  
There's nothing calm but heaven !

MOORE.

XXV.

Heavenly-Mindedness.

Now let our souls, on wing sublime,  
Rise from the vanities of time ;  
Draw back the parting veil and see  
The glories of eternity.

Shall aught beguile us on the road,  
When we are walking back to God ?  
For strangers into life we come,  
And dying is but going home.

Welcome sweet hour of full discharge,  
That sets our longing souls at large !  
Unbinds our chains, breaks up our cell,  
And gives us with our God to dwell.

To dwell with God, to feel his love,  
Is the full heaven enjoyed above ;  
And the sweet expectation now  
Is the young dawn of heaven below.

GIBBONS.

## XXV.

### HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

TO be able to realise and enjoy the blessedness of religion it is most necessary that it have the central place in our thoughts and affections. Whatever we most prize must give us most pleasure in the pursuit or possession, and it can be no wonder if God's promises fail to engage our souls with such fulness of delight as they might, if we give the weight of our interest to matters of this world, and only our passing and occasional regards to those of the world to come. It is when the light from a higher life shines on our present affairs, that they kindle into brightness not their own, as the very earth turns to gold, and worthless potsherds gleam like jewels, in the beams of the sun. But men often think themselves justified in complaining, if, while they give their serious thoughts to this world, and only now and then

look up to God, they have not such happiness from the things of eternity, and from the gracious assurances of God's promises, even for a time, as they had expected. It would be little good to wear the softest garments outside, and the roughest next the body, and then lament that the softness gave little pleasure; little good to keep the eyes fixed on the ground, and then sigh that you did not see the crown of glory held out overhead; little good to hold something before them, and then think it hard that you could not enjoy the beauty of what you yourself had hidden.

Earthly things must get only their share of our attention, else they will crowd out all else, until there be no room for Christ in our hearts, as when He was with his mother, at the inn. We must needs, in such a case, put Him in the manger, when all the chambers for guests are full. It is right enough to be in earnest with our daily business; but we need not let it fill our whole soul. Why not keep an inner holy of holies sacred to Him in our breasts; why not have a private oratory in the soul, as becomes so grand a mansion? Martha who was troubled about many things, did not, with

Mary, her sister, sit at Christ's feet, to hear his words, but was forced to neglect the one thing needful, by her over anxiety for the multitude of petty cares and solitudes, with most of which she might have safely dispensed. The greatest honour to Christ would have been to have given no more than a respectful attention to lower hospitalities, and her more engrossing interest to the higher ministrations she might have received from his lips. Too much thought of outward courtesies, even with a good purpose, is hurtful, if the soul be diverted by them from its true homage of worship and reverend docility.

It is well if undue engrossment in our common avocations and pursuits, have not even a worse issue than mere pre-occupation of the heart. They too often distaste us for anything higher, as with the Pharisees, who gave themselves out as "separated" to the things of religion, and yet were so set on covetousness, that, when Christ preached against the love of the world, they "derided Him." They had so long set their affections on the riches and honours of life, that the things of the future had not only no charm, but were an unwelcome intrusion.

The full soul loathes a honeycomb, though the honey be ever so sweet, and the appetite cloyed with food ever so plain. The things of the world, if loved and made the main care, wean the affections from God and Christ, and turn them to impure satisfactions, instead of that holiness which alone has communion with heaven. We cannot love opposites, but must choose between time and eternity, God and Mammon. As the feet point the body follows. To try to make the best of both worlds is a snare which entangles us in the present and eclipses the future. As Bunyan says:—

“Here little, and, hereafter, bliss,  
Is best from age to age.”

If riches increase, set not your heart upon them; and do not set your heart upon the making them increase, at first. Be diligent in your calling, but always with a due subordination of its hold on your soul, in comparison with the calling to heavenly riches, which God has given you in Christ Jesus.

It is no wonder, the danger being so great, that the Apostle enjoins Timothy to “charge them that are rich in this world, that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God.”

Our senses have great power, and the present is always apt to outweigh the future, unless we wisely keep in mind that, after all, the moment passes, but eternity is for ever. It is hard to think what is so pleasant will soon be over; that the luxuries and comforts of even the best estate, must be changed for the darkness and silence of the grave; that the excitement of life is to be hushed in the sleep of the dust: hard to think that the mansion must be exchanged for the narrow bounds of the coffin; and the pride of life be humbled to the sadness of the chamber of death. We need to reason against our illusions; need to call ourselves back from the natural habit of thinking that what is to-day must continue to-morrow.

“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out! out! brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing!”

The wine, and the corn, and the oil, increasing,  
 fill the heart with a foolish tranquillity and



complacence, which build up a future of airy fancies and fond wishes, destined to mock us while we yet dwell on it, as a dream when one awakes. But, while it lasts, there is no taste—there can be none—for the purer spiritual joys of religion; the Spirit of God, deserts the soul which is so profaned.

The heart divided, loses the enjoyment of both worlds alike. St. James compared the “double minded man” to the tongue of a balance, which is never at rest, but rises and falls with every breath, unable to steady itself either upward or downward. His soul flies with clipped wings, able to rise for a moment, but it presently falls to the earth again, and yet is unable to rest. He runs well for a time, like the Galatians, but something soon hinders him. Like Lot’s wife, he can neither flee to the mountain nor stay in the city, but lingers between the two, to perish. His heart points every way, like the needle amid counter attractions, and loses its due polarity. If you wish to enjoy the promises, make them your portion, for where the treasure is there will the heart be also, and where the heart is, we have our joy. It is too true that, in the best of men, there

will be ever an unsteadiness in their religious emotions; but the fluctuations of feeling are no proof of the depth or weakness of the affections, else it would be right to charge us with not loving our earthly dear ones, when we are busied by duties, which, for the time, suspend our delight in them. The love is not wanting, but lies far down in the soul, till a passing occasion presently wakes it to stronger vigour. The saint may have less enthusiasm at one moment than at another, but his heart is none the less true, as the dial is none the less true to the sun that a cloud hides the shadow in passing; when it is gone, the sun and the dial are still as they were to each other.

The lesson to lay to mind is to use the world as not abusing it. To thank God for the favours of fortune if they be granted, but to be modest in courting them; to use them as flowers to smell, not as a garland with which to be crowned; as a staff in our hand to help us on in our pilgrimage, not as a burden to weigh us down. We may make them encouragements, not our confidence; we may enjoy them as subordinate blessings, but must not make them our highest good. As bees,

though they live in the midst of their cells of honey and wax, keep their wings untouched by one or the other, and are ever ready to fly abroad and range through the flowers, we should so enjoy the good things of this life, at its best, as to leave the wings of our soul ever free to mount up, in delightful flight, towards higher blessings and more etherial joys.

**XXVI.**

**Faith is not Assurance.**

WHEN, gracious Lord, when shall it be  
That I shall find my all in Thee ;  
The fulness of Thy promise prove,  
The seal of Thine eternal love ?

Thee, only Thee, I fain would find,  
And cast the world and flesh behind ;  
Thou, only Thou, to me be given  
Of all Thou hast, in earth or heaven.

Ah ! wherefore did I ever doubt ?  
Thou wilt in no wise cast me out ;  
A helpless soul that comes to Thee,  
With only sin and misery.

Lord, I am sick ; my sickness cure ;  
I want ; do Thou enrich the poor ;  
Under Thy mighty hand I stoop ;  
O lift the abject sinner up !

Lord, I am blind ; be Thou my sight :  
Lord ; I am weak, be Thou my might :  
A Helper of the helpless be ;  
And let me find my all in Thee.

C. WESLEY.

## XXVI.

### FAITH IS NOT ASSURANCE.

IT is often a great stumbling-block to humble but faint-hearted Christians that they fancy they cannot be true believers if they have not full assurance that they are accepted by God. Many a worthy soul goes softly all his days, fearing to lay hold on the promises, from a sense of unworthiness and a dread of presumption. But it is very certain, whatever some may say, that assurance is not faith, but a result of it, attained only gradually and sometimes not at all : the ripened fruit in the autumn of one's experience, for the most part, rather than a spring blossom. St. John writes to the Christians of his day,—“These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the name of the Son of God, that ye *may know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”\*

\* 1 John v. 13.

If the assurance of salvation always attended belief, he could not have spoken in words like these, for he seeks to tell them, how, though believers, they may *come to know* that they have eternal life. They had the life, and yet did not know it. It is one thing to have a right to heaven, and another thing to know it; it is one thing for God to write a man's name in the book of life, and another thing for a man to know that it is so written. The seven beatitudes are not promised to assurance, but to poverty of spirit, to true mourners, to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and to others of similar classes. Not a word is found in all the invitations of Christ that makes our salvation turn on our confidence that we are accepted. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the one is full of false security and presumption; the other, through a sense of his unworthiness, stands afar off, afraid to draw nigh; smites on his breast in self-condemnation; will not so much as lift up his eyes to meet the eyes of a holy God; and accuses himself as a great sinner; and yet, though thus vile and comfortless in his own sight, he goes away justified, while

the other has no such favour vouchsafed. But the publican could not have been justified if he had not had faith, which, indeed, his very prayer and presence before God show him to have had.

Christ's sayings to his disciples point to the same comfort. In the chapter in which He rebukes them as, "O ye of little faith,"—He adds, in the fourth verse after, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."\* The life may be hid in the root in the cold winter weather of fears and doubts, and yet rise and grow green again with returning spring. David could not have had assurance when He prays, "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation," or, "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." St. Paul could hardly have had assurance when he wrote, "lest having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." It was long after this that he told Timothy, he "knew Him in whom he believed;" his earlier days had been often dark, but at eventide there was light. We are to work out our salvation with fear and

\* Luke xii. 28, 32.



trembling, which are the very opposites of confidence and assurance.

If, further, we think of the conditions of forgiveness and peace, we shall find both promised to belief, to coming to Christ, to casting our burdens on the Lord—without any mention of “assurance” being required. And, indeed, it is well that it is so, else how many thousands of God’s true people would be utterly overwhelmed? The different names given to believers convey the same comfort. There are old disciples, like Mnason; there are young men, like Timothy; and there are tender babes;—souls skilled in the mysteries of the truth, and others that have need of the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. There are in the fold of Christ, not only sheep, whom He leads forth into green pastures, but feeble lambs, whom He gathers with his arm, and carries in his bosom, to help their weakness, to protect their simplicity, and to quicken their frail spark of life. But if all had assurance, in what would the babe differ from the grown man? How should the hungry and thirsty soul, that clings to the hope that He is Christ’s, yet dare not venture to think he is

bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, be comforted? What staff would you leave in the hands of those who, though faint; are still pursuing, if you require that they have no doubts or self-distrust. No; it is not in any joy or satisfaction of the soul that salvation is found, but in Christ alone. Faith in Him, if it be but as a mustard-seed, has the promise. Nay more, though it falter, and own its weakness, it is not rejected, as we see in his case who cried in his trouble, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Mary Magdalene was very near her Lord, and yet she stood mourning, sighing, and lamenting, that they had taken Him away. God seldom gives an absolute, complete, and perfect assurance till we come to heaven. We are, most of us, like Faint-heart, who needed his Master to help him over the river, and keep him from sinking. This pearl of great price is one of the jewels mostly reserved for the soul's robe in paradise. Why it should be so, is among the counsels of God, which we see in a glass darkly. It may be, we should lose the trial of faith, which brings so much honour, and praise, and glory, if we had no doubts and fears

against which to struggle. It may be, we should not know our own sinfulness, if we had not this constant proof of it. It may be, that, like Peter, if thus filled with seraphic joy, we should wish to stay in rapture on the mount, rather than come down to the plain, to our daily duties. Humility is of so passing value, that it may be well for us to have to purchase it even at a price like this.

Against all this it is sometimes urged that if it be said that we need only look to Jesus, as the Israelites looked to the serpent, to be saved, how can it be so hard to know that we have done so? But to look with the natural eye is very different from that turning of the heart which is figuratively called looking to Christ. The one is an act of the body: the other a hidden and subtle state of the heart: there is room for doubt as to the one; none, as to the other. The one needs no proof, for the sight of the object assures us; the other is only determined as really done, by the fruits it yields in our lives. It is by our fruits we know ourselves, as it is by them we are known. So, where it is said, "If a man be born again, how can he fail to know such a fact?" But

to be born is only to begin to live, and we all know how feeble and half-unconscious life is in its beginnings. A child is not born forty years old, but only a baby, and what does a baby know of its own life? Can it tell you that it has been born? You will have to wait till its faculties grow before it can be expected to answer.

How, then, are we to know if we can claim a share in the promises? I would say, examine your spirit and actions. When the soul has really determined for Christ, the signs of its change are presently visible, in the zeal with which it sets to work at whatever Christian duty lies next to hand. The proof of all life is vital motion; death is stagnant passivity. Some trees flower before they have leaves, but others flower only in autumn: if you fail to find flowers, see if you have the earnest, in buds and leaves. The tree is none the less living, that its blossoming comes later than that of some others. See if you are turning from evil, and setting your face towards God; whether you look to Him for strength, and delight in approaching Him; whether you daily lament your shortcomings, and seek to

rest in the shadow of the Saviour's cross, and whether you daily seek to work for God as the bent of your new affections.

It is not needed that you sigh for great things to do, but rather that you do whatever lies in your daily sphere, in a Christian spirit, which may be shown in the smallest as well as the greatest requirements of our position. Habitual desire to please God is a grace that can only come from Him.

XXVII.

To the Uttermost.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!  
What more can He say, than to you He hath said,  
You, who, unto Jesus, for refuge have fled?

In every condition ; in sickness, in health,  
In joy or deep sorrow, in want or in wealth ;  
At home or abroad, on the land, on the sea,  
As thy day may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow ;  
The flame shall not hurt thee ; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

Fear not, I am with thee ; O be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid ;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous omnipotent hand.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
I will not, I cannot give up to its foes ;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

KIRKHAM.

## XXVII.

### TO THE UTTERMOST.


WE meet some poor despairing creatures, at times, who have settled into a gloomy belief that the promises of God may be free enough for others, but not for such as themselves—sinners—they think, beyond the reach even of the plenteous mercy of their Maker. Is there any need for such despair? Assuredly not. We cannot sin ourselves beyond the power of Christ's blood to cleanse away every spot. No dye can be deeper than crimson, yet, if our sins were as deep as that, the merits of Christ can make them as white as the snow; no hue can be stronger than scarlet, yet if our sins be as glaring as that, they may be so washed away that our souls will be white as the fleecy wool.

One source of this eclipsing of hope, may, I fear, be found, with some, in a mere sullen unwillingness to give up the sins which they half



fear will be their ruin hereafter, yet half hope may in some way be overlooked. No man would willingly sit down and resign himself to eternal ruin, if he really believed he was sure to incur it, and yet he may have a sad doubt, at times, though not deep and lasting enough to lead him to change his life. For excuse and self-justification, he may say he is too bad to be saved, but the honest truth is, he will not comply with the conditions of safety, though he knows they would bring him within the range of the promises. He does not feel what he says when he condemns himself thus, but must say something, and has hit on this silly bravado and bitter attempt at indifference. Foolish man! as if shutting his eyes on danger laid it asleep; as if the mere possibility of being lost were not enough to rouse him at once; as if sin were not, in itself, so hateful, that the conscience tells us we ought to be godly for the very pleasure of self-approval!

Sadder, far, is the case of those who sink into despair through mistaken views of the offers of mercy. It may be that mental disease induces the dreadful perversion, and, if so, the intellect must be restored before the clouds



will pass. Harsh and alarming theology is often the origin of such distressing illusions. I remember a young man, a student for the Church, who had overtaxed his powers, getting thus bemazed with the awful creations of his weakened brain. He sat for years at his mother's fire, silent and hopeless, with no words to any who spoke to him, but—"I have committed the sin that has no forgiveness, and am eternally lost!" He sank into decline at last, and died, to find, I trust and believe, in a brighter state, how his physical malady had obscured the vision of heavenly love.

If you will look at the passages where it is mentioned, you will find that this awful transgression is nothing but the sullen, wicked, and fixed resistance to the strivings of the Spirit of God with the soul; the wilful and malignant quenching his light within us; the abiding choice of evil rather than good; \* the settled opposition to Christ, which goes the length of blaspheming the Holy Ghost by which He works, and affecting to speak of his voice and acts as the acts of the wicked one. The occasions where it is mentioned were when the Pharisees,

\* Matt. xii. 22—27. Mark iii. 22—30.

rather than yield to the overwhelming evidence daily thrust upon them, and in particular to that of his miraculous cure of one possessed by a blind and dumb devil, contemned his words, and ascribed his mighty works to Satan rather than to God. Minds so blinded against the truth; so settled and wilful in its rejection, had themselves written their own condemnation, without the need of any special sentence. The Holy Spirit is the quickening life of the soul, and to put Him away is to choose evil and to refuse to be saved. If a soul come to such utter moral corruption as to speak of the Holy Ghost, the blessed Spirit of God, as an "unclean spirit," what more can God do for him? What else can follow but everlasting ruin?

But who is there that can lay such an awful condition of heart to his charge? Not surely those whose greatest fear it is lest they should have honoured the Spirit only too little; not those in whose minds a dark temptation has risen, only to be repelled with strong crying and tears? The very alarm shows that, so far from rejecting Him, the only dread is lest He has rejected us. It speaks of a heart yearning to have Him come; of a heart that is only

kept from peace by a lowly humility, which thinks itself unworthy, like Zaccheus, that its Lord should enter its dwelling. Fear to offend is the attitude of repentance, not of hardened depravity. Until you have come to think the gracious Spirit a spirit of evil, and Christ an envoy of Satan, to deceive and destroy, rather than save and bless, you cannot be in the position of those whom Christ addressed.

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him; whether they have never fallen into relapses or, having fallen, have returned to their right mind. Christ tells us that we are to forgive to seventy times seven, and how high above our ways are his! How infinitely greater his pitying tenderness than ours! How often had He to rebuke his disciples when on earth! and yet He calls them his friends as He leaves them, and lifts up his hands and blesses them. Peter fell sadly, after amazing condescensions and endearments shown him, but when he went out and wept bitterly, all was forgiven. It is not the greatness of our sin, but the depth of our repentance, that brings us near God, for where there is much forgiven, the heart loves

the more. It was she out of whom Christ had cast seven devils who sought Him in the garden, weeping, and it is told of St. Peter that all his life after his fall, he used to wake at cock-crowing, and kneel, with tears, to be forgiven. The prodigal, welcomed back, had a broken humility, ready to be or to do whatever his father wished, and a grateful love, which made his joy the greater the more return it could render. David was never more noble than when he sought God after his great sin, in the fifty-first Psalm, that wonderful utterance of a broken and contrite heart, looking through heavy clouds of shame and guilt to the face of his Father in heaven. It is a sweet and comfortable thought that, if sin abounds, grace does much more abound; like the waters of the deluge that overtopped the highest hills. It were a poor tribute to the merits of Christ to think that they can only save on a first repentance. If it were so, no one would find the gate of heaven, for each day brings need of new repentance, and fresh forgiveness, to even the greatest saints. And if they have thus to come, come thou also, O guiltiest of the guilty, among them, for does it not say that "the

blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin?" We know how it is with our children when they sadden us most, by turning aside from the right, and wandering far from the ways of God. If they but come to themselves, at last, and, like the prodigal, say, "I will arise and go to my father," we see them a great way off, and our souls yearn with a love the deeper for long solicitude, and we run forth and fall on their neck, and kiss them. If so with us, how much rather must the heart of our Father above, who is love itself, delight in receiving his backsliding son, when he casts away his folly, and seeks to kneel as a penitent at his feet! You dishonour God by doubting his grace to all who seek it. He says, "He will in no wise cast out any who come to Him," and He is the God of Truth. Human charity suffereth long and is kind, how much more the charity of the Eternal! Christian life is only sustained by daily renewals; the fire would go out on the altar of the heart, if it were not re-kindled each day by his grace.

As long as life its term extends  
Hope's blest dominion never ends—  
For while the lamp holds on to burn,  
The *vilest* sinner may return.

TIME's an hand-breadth; 'tis a tale;  
'Tis a vessel under sail;  
'Tis an eagle on its way,  
Darting down upon its prey;  
'Tis an arrow in its flight,  
Mocking the pursuing sight;  
'Tis a short-lived fading flower;  
'Tis a rainbow on a shower;  
'Tis a momentary ray,  
Smiling in a winter's day;  
'Tis a torrent's rapid stream;  
'Tis a shadow; 'tis a dream;  
'Tis the closing watch of night,  
Dying at the rising light;  
'Tis a bubble; 'tis a sigh;  
Be prepared, O man, to die!

QUARLES. 1592—1644.

XXVIII.

The Promises for this Life.



GUIDE me, O Thou great Jehovah !  
Pilgrim, through this weary land ;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand :  
Bread of heaven !  
Feed me till I want no more.

Open Thou the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing streams do flow ;  
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through ;  
Strong Deliverer !  
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside ;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction !  
Land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises  
I will ever give to Thee !

WILLIAMS.

## XXVIII.

### THE PROMISES FOR THIS LIFE.

THE right use of the promises that ripen into fruitage under these lower skies is of great moment, not only to our present interests, but to our higher and everlasting. To lean too much on them for outward blessings, or not to lean enough on them, or to forget that their denial may often be greater kindness than the granting them, is only too easy, and often prevents the benefits God intends for us.

What could free us so much from the cares and distracting anxieties of our daily affairs, as an abiding remembrance that One, higher and wiser than we, is making all things work together for our good, and that all our steps are ordered by Him, in unerring love? We fret and worry ourselves as if everything depended on our own abilities, and industry, and judgment; as if we had nothing to which

to trust, for days of trouble, or for age, but what we ourselves can gather; forgetful of the counsels of our Saviour to look to Him who clothes the lily, and feeds the raven, and cares for the sparrow. If we could only come to feel that God means what He says, and that He will guide us unto death, and never leave us nor forsake us, this life would, to the end, be much like that of happy, trustful childhood, which never fears for the future, but takes for granted that its father will supply all its wants. There would be fewer furrows in the brow, and less paleness in the cheeks, and more brightness in the eye, if we could even approach the realisation of this constant tender care for all our needs.

To have such a trust, and to accept as a fulfilment of it, whatever God sends us, would have the further good of leading us to a more joyful confidence in the promises that affect the life hereafter. For, if we feel that He is daily caring for the wants of the body, can we doubt that He will duly provide for those of the soul; that, if He give us our daily bread here, He will be with us in the world to come? If we feel that He makes our whole life a

witness to his love and faithfulness, we must needs believe that He will crown our journey's end—that if He thus guide us to death, it must be, that, according to his word, He may conduct us to glory.

How would it lead us to accept, with a hidden joy which others cannot share, whatever is vouchsafed us! “Does my Heavenly Father send me this?” we should say—“How ought I to honour a gift from his hand—how ought I to rejoice in the proofs that He does not forget me, nor think me beneath his regard!” The gift of a king, if only a ribbon or a badge, is prized, not for its own value, but for its source, as the token of favour in high places. But how much greater the least gift of the glorious God! Favour with Him, however shown, brings with it the earnest of we know not what greater bounty, to follow. It is the pledge of a love that will leave no want unsatisfied, and that has heavenly riches to rejoice us for ever.

Nothing can more effectively keep us from fleeing to unworthy courses than the conviction that God is our friend, and that He will provide for us in every strait. To trust in the promises

does not abate our industry in all lawful and common means, or give us the right to expect to be fed like the ravens, or clothed like the lilies, without working for food and raiment, but it checks our trying doubtful courses even in our darkest hours. It keeps us from making haste to be rich by schemes which conscience condemns, for it teaches that it is not our labour or skill that brings true success, but the blessing of God, which makes rich and adds no sorrow with it. For, after all, it is not our sowing, or planting, but the bounty of God that gives us increase.

Yet we must guard against any such view of the promises of temporal favours as would bind God down to grant them without conditions, or otherwise than He pleases. The great end of his providence towards us is to lead us nearer to Himself, that we may enjoy communion with Him in everlasting glory ; to fit us, by discipline, for the rest that remains for his people in heaven. All the blessings of life—prosperity, riches, health, and the like, are dispensed with an eye to this higher good, and, hence, it may be, they are kept back, when we most expect them, because He sees it

is wisest that we be without them. A child wants much which a parent refuses as hurtful. It has often to bear denials, if only to teach it submission and duty. In our prayers for present benefits, then, let us remember to ask them, with such a condition admitted, as may demand their being withheld or granted only in part.

We are, besides, to reflect that an answer may come in some other way than we expect. If health be prayed for and not granted, God gives strength to bear the cross, by putting beneath us the everlasting arms. It was thus with St. Paul, who had still to bear the thorn in the flesh, but had grace bestowed, which made him able to do so, and made him the better that it was borne. If deliverance in trouble be asked, and denied, He gives us songs in the night, and consolation in all our griefs. He does not break his promises, but changes them for the better.

Nor must we forget, that temporal promises never justify our expecting to escape the cross, which Christ has told us all his people must bear. As a father, God keeps in his hands the right to chasten us for our good, that we may

be partakers of his holiness. If He says He will comfort us as one whom his mother comforteth, He also tells us, that if we be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons. We must never judge God's heart by his hand, nor think Him unmindful of his covenant, because He cannot, for our own good, indulge our present desires, but sends us what He thinks more for our benefit.

Promises for earthly blessings are only given in answer to prayer, and it must be the prayer of faith, nothing wavering. Such a prayer as does not insist on having the very thing asked, but full of loving submission; which says, like Christ, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." When we doubt his willingness, or his power, to fulfil his word, our prayer is a dishonour to Him, and cannot expect to be heard, but when we feel that He is both willing and able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, and resign our desires to his will, we have prayed in faith, and He will not turn from us.

We must ask favours for worthy ends; not like those in St. James, who asked and received

not, because they asked amiss, that they might consume it on their lusts. It is not enough that it be not an immoral aim we have in our thoughts, it must be one becoming the great purpose of life; to rise to the image of God. Many a prayer is unanswered because it has no further aim than the lower enjoyments of sense. God will give us nothing that is not sought for the soul as well as the body.

Never forget that temporal promises come, thus, only second. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." The soul can do without the body, but the body cannot do without the soul. We may be rich though we want all earthly comforts; but we may be poor in the true sense, though, like Dives, we be in purple. "Heaven first" must be our motto, and that all through life; taking care not to pray only for worldly blessings as long as we are in health, and cry for those of the world to come, only when we can no longer stay here.



PILGRIM, burdened with thy sin.  
Come the way to Zion's gate ;  
There, till mercy speak within,  
Knock, and weep, and watch, and wait.  
Knock, He know's the sinner's cry ;  
Weep, He loves the mourner's tears ;  
Watch, for saving grace is nigh ;  
Wait till heavenly light appears.

Hark ! it is the Saviour's voice ;  
" Welcome, Pilgrim, to thy rest ;  
Now within the gate rejoice,  
Safe, and owned, and bought, and blest.  
Safe from all the lures of vice ;  
Owned by joys thy children know ;  
Bought by love, and life the price ;  
Blest since He has loved thee so.

Holy Pilgrim ! what for thee  
In the world can now remain ?  
From thy peaceful breast shall flee  
Fear, and shame, and doubt, and pain :  
Fear before his love shall fly ;  
Shame from glory's view retire ;  
Doubt in full belief shall die ;  
Pain in endless bliss expire.

**XXIX.**

**Princes in Disguise.**

Jesus, still lead on  
Till our rest be won ;  
And although the way be cheerless,  
We will follow, calm and fearless ;  
Guide us by Thy hand  
To our Fatherland.

If the way be drear,  
If the foe be near,  
Let not faithless fears o'ertake us,  
Let not faith and hope forsake us ;  
For, through many a foe,  
To our home we go.

When we seek relief  
From a long-felt grief :  
When oppressed by new temptations,  
Lord increase and perfect patience,  
Show us that bright shore  
Where we weep no more.

Jesus, still lead on  
Till our rest be won ;  
Heavenly leader, still direct us,  
Still support, console, protect us,  
Till we safely stand  
In our Fatherland.

ZINZENDORF. 1700—1760.

## XXIX.

### PRINCES IN DISGUISE.

**I**T was a striking saying of Luther's, that a Christian peasant was higher than Alexander, the conqueror of the world ; a saying which does not dwell sufficiently in the hearts of believers, else they would less often be cast down and troubled. Yet it is true in a grander sense than we can realise, for the greatest ruler among men has only a passing glory, and may be sad amidst all his splendour, whereas the Christian is a son of the Most High God, and will reign for ever and ever, with no shadow of self-reproach, or of sadness, to cloud his joy. He may have his lot cast in the humblest ranks of life, and have no share in the honours and privileges of the great ones of the earth ; he may eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, toiling from morning to night in the lowliest occupations ; he may be friendless and op-

pressed ; with no one to plead his cause or pity his wrongs, or stand up for his rights ; he may find a deaf and regardless ear turned to his words, and feel that right has to suffer because it is weak ; he may, perhaps, be the most abject and forlorn of the sons of men,—yet, by his interest in the promises, he stands higher in all that is most truly noble, and is richer in the inheritance of which he is heir, than the mightiest lords or emperors. It must, indeed, be so, when we think that he is a citizen of the New Jerusalem, which is above, whose gates are pearls, and streets pure gold ; where the saints wear crowns of unfading glory, and robes whiter than light, and dwell for ever in the presence of God. If he be a bondman among men, he is a freeman of heaven ; if men despise him, the Eternal loves him ; if he be friendless here, he is a friend of Him who sits on the throne of the universe ; God is his Father, Christ his Brother, and the Holy Spirit his Comforter. If his cries and tears avail nothing on earth, they are noted and remembered above.

Poverty is a hard lot, but the Christian, though poor for a time, while he lives amongst

men, is rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him. Others have their portion in this life; he has his reward in the life eternal. The ungodly may get the desire of their heart, but God sends leanness into their souls; whereas, though the Christian may suffer like Christ, while here, he will be glorified with Him hereafter. He may seem to be poor, yet he has that which can make many rich; he may seem to have nothing, and yet he possesses all things. For, after all, it is not what we have, but what we are, that makes us happy. An approving conscience, a contented spirit, a bright and unclouded hope, and sweet communion with Him whom his soul loves, make the saint richer than kings, whatever his outward condition. He is always whole hearted, for he knows that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He has the secret of happiness in this thought, for he has but to steal away from the world, and climb the heights of the promises, to look down on all the mists and troubles of the world spread out at his

feet, and to see the clear skies and the stars shining calmly above. The cares of life may rest on the valley, but he is above them, and the sounds of night die away far below, as he communes with God in a stillness that fills him with holy joy. He knows that his soul is safe, that the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen eternal ; and he knows that, when Christ shall appear, he shall be like Him, and see Him as He is.

The one refuge from the troubles and fretting perplexities which follow us all in our daily callings, is to be found only in this glorious hope. Men of every position have their own cares, for life brings them in clouds to us all ; but he who can look forward to the rest of heaven, has a sanctuary into which they cannot intrude. He knows that a wise purpose runs through our life, and that what we may not know now, we shall know hereafter. To the Christian, time is a mystic, unresting loom, ever weaving his wondrous destiny. He knows that he looks, now, only at the wrong side, and cannot tell the design ; and he longs for that day when it will be shown in its glory. He thinks of all the events of his lot

as he would of the strange plates and bolts and unshapely bars he might see in some rough and resounding forge,—mere confusion and chaos, perhaps, as they lie awaiting their destined use, but joining at last, piece to piece, each bend and angle exactly suiting the end designed, plate fitting to plate, till a mighty vessel stands ready to glide into the waters. Or, he says to himself, God does with me as the sculptor does with the stone in which the creation he seeks to bring out is hidden. Not a blow of the mallet but has wisdom to guide it; not a fragment broken away but is better gone, though, as it falls, the whole may seem ruined. Wait till the work has advanced awhile, and the rough outline, which each day will make clearer, and bring nearer perfection, stands out, ever, more plainly! When it is done, the image will stand revealed in all its beauty, and you will see that a grand purpose has run through every step from the first to the last. And what an image is it into which God designs to mould our souls—the likeness to his own glorious nature—the transformation of our poor imperfection into the divine attractions of his own being. Kings



and princes have only outward splendour—their majesty lies in their robes and pomp; but the glory of the saints, in heaven, is that of the spirit, and shines forth through their every faculty, like light from a lamp. A few years, and earthly splendour fades, and kings and princes lie in the dishonoured darkness of death, but the honours of the saints outlive the grave, and continue ever increasing, through eternity. The humblest Christian is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ; he has angels for his ministering servants; the spirits of just men made perfect for his brethren; and heaven for his home. Lazarus lying at the gate, awaiting his place in Abraham's bosom, was more to be envied than Dives. St. Paul, at Nero's bar, was a greater man than the emperor of the world who called him prisoner—for all things were his—both life and death—things present and things to come. The very child that dies in its cradle and is carried above to stand in the presence of God for ever, is higher than all the kings of the earth. The more trouble and care, the more precious the promises, for the gifts of God, like jewels, shine brightest in the dark.

XXX.

Hallelujah.

FROM Egypt's bondage come,  
Where death and darkness reign,  
We seek our new, our better home,  
Where we our rest shall gain.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

To Canaan's sacred bound,  
We haste with songs of joy ;  
Where peace and liberty are found,  
And sweets that never cloy.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

There sin and sorrow cease,  
And every conflict's o'er ;  
There we shall dwell in endless peace,  
Nor thirst nor hunger more.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

There, in celestial strains,  
Enraptured myriads sing ;  
There love in every bosom reigns,  
For God himself is King.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

We soon shall join the throng ;  
Their pleasures we shall share ;  
And sing the everlasting song,  
With all the ransomed there.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

How bright the prospect is !  
It cheers the pilgrim's breast :  
We're journeying through the wilderness,  
But soon shall gain our rest.

Hallelujah !

We are on our way to God.

KELLY.

## XXXI.

### HALLELUJAH!

THAT the believer should enjoy the rich gifts of the promises must be felt to call for deep and abiding thanks to Him from whom such immeasurable favours come. David's words rise naturally to the lips at the very thought of them,—“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits;”—“Let all that is within me bless his holy name.” We adopt as the expression of our own hearts the sweet record of God's grace which he annexes,—“He forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases,”—and, again,—“He redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies,”—a song of praise for his tender and saving love—“He satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's,”—an acknowledgment of his sustaining and renewing mercies.

It is becoming to give thanks to God, if for nothing else than that He claims this return. We must not think of Him as delighting to hear himself praised, as vain man does, but gratitude is the life of religious feeling, and is required for our good. Heaven re-echoes with ascriptions of thanks and glory to Him, as the source of all the felicity of those blessed regions, for it is thus that the hearts of the innumerable multitudes who stand before Him, find the natural utterance of their adoration. We on earth surely need such aid to our devotion, who have hearts so cold and little used to any elevation. The angels at Bethlehem sang glory to God in the highest, and the Samaritan leper who, when he saw he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, was singled out for special praise by our Lord. Prophets and apostles abound in thanksgiving, and call upon us to bless and magnify God. The saints are brought to their glorious inheritance "that they should be to the praise of the glory of his grace." It is the one grand end to which all holy natures tend, to be ever fixed on God as their chiefest joy. Praising Him for what

they have received at his hand, they grow more spiritual in their affections, and quicken their gratitude till it kindle their whole being to holy love, which is the happiness of the redeemed.

It is becoming to give God praise and thankful acknowledgments for all the promises, because this is the only return we can make for them. The cattle upon a thousand hills are his, so that to offer Him sacrifice, is but to give Him of his own. The silver and the gold are his, so that all our gifts are but the repayment of what He has first conferred. "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee," may be as justly said by us as by Solomon of old. It is no enriching of the Almighty to spend our substance on his glory, but it is a mighty benefit to ourselves to express in the only form possible for us those sentiments of gratitude and reverend love which are so due. The use of worship and all religious feelings is to bring us nearer to God, not to bring Him nearer to us. To use John Newton's figure about prayer, they are like the boathook that pulls the boat to the wharf, not the wharf to the boat. They

raise our affections, and stimulate our obedience, and thus help us to live more as we should; more to God's glory; more to our own highest good. Nor does God think little of our thanks, though we have nothing more of our own to render, for He looks at them in their source, and takes them for what they are—the offering not of poor words, but of a loving heart. It is with Him as with ourselves; He does not value his children's gifts by what they are intrinsically worth in themselves, but for the feelings they embody. The mother takes the first flower her girl brings her, and puts it sacredly away in the leaves of her Bible, to look at with fond memories in after-years. It is not a mere fading worthless flower to her; it is a tender human heart; embodied love, and duty, and devotion. Our praise is valued by our heavenly Father from the same sacred worth; the thin cloud of breath that rises towards Him in our songs is the incense from the altar of a spirit's love. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" says David; and then, at the end of his musings and studies, he can find no other way but this; "I will take

the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

This one return of praise and thanksgiving is all that the highest of men can offer to God for his numberless mercies, but it is an offering all can make alike, and all with equal acceptance, whether rich or poor. The children in the Gospels cried, "Hosanna: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," and the highest angel could do no more. God has given all men, of whatever rank, equal privileges of approach to Him, both in what they have to bring and in the free invitation to bring it. We all have the power to love and praise Him, and the highest has no more of it than the humblest. All may love Him, and to do so is all that the greatest or best can do. The peasant and the monarch meet on the same footing, and have no advantage in God's sight, one of the other, for the heart of each can be equally filled with humble adoring thanks and praise, and neither can offer anything else that God values.

In the calm and untroubled regions of everlasting felicity this one accepted sacrifice of grateful love rises from every heart, day with-



out night, for ever, and if we hope ere long to enter these happy spheres, and take our place in them, it must be surely well to habituate ourselves here to that which will be our constant occupation there. The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, whatever their varied employments before the throne or in the remotest region of the universe, are ever ready to take part in that celestial choir who sing with loud voices,—“Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.” How fitting for us, if we hope to be among them, after we leave this world, to prepare betimes to bear part in their songs!

That your thanksgiving may be rightly directed, and not spend itself in empty words, without befitting fruits in the heart, do not forget the Apostle’s injunction—“Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the fear of God.” Thankfulness cannot show itself more appropriately than in holiness, nor can a believer give better proof of his honouring the promises than by his steadfastly press-

ing on to nobler Christian attainments. Lip thanks are nothing without life thanks. To cease to do evil and learn to do well is the one evidence that we mean what our words express, in our praises. If you have yourself tasted the blessedness of peace and joy in believing, do your best to bring others to the fountain from which you have drunk. It is a winning proof of sincerity when you seek to lead others to value what you have found precious. In all your thanks do not forget the unspeakable gift, the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have all we shall ever enjoy. His blood bought us; his intercession pleads for us; it is He who will be our righteousness in that day. Let your heart abound in thanksgiving for all God's mercies, but especially for that chiefest and most amazing—his dear Son.

## THE HYMN OF THE DYING SAINT.

I SHALL not in the grave remain,  
Since Thou death's bonds hast severed ;  
By hope, with Thee, to rise again,  
From fear of death delivered.  
I'll come to Thee, where'er Thou art,  
Live with Thee ; from Thee never part ;  
Therefore, to die is rapture.

And so to Jesus Christ I'll go,  
My longing arms extending ;  
So, fall asleep in slumber deep—  
Slumber that knows no ending—  
Till Jesus Christ, God's only Son,  
Opens the gates of bliss—leads on  
To heaven, to life eternal.

*German Chorale, sung at Prince  
Albert's Funeral.*

**XXXI.**

**Farewell.**

BEHOLD ! how glorious is yon sky ;  
Lo ! there the righteous never die,  
But dwell in peace for ever :  
Then who would wear this earthly clay,  
When bid to cast life's chains away,  
And win Thy gracious favour ?  
Holy, holy ! O forgive us,  
And receive us, heavenly Father,  
When around Thy throne we gather.

Confiding in Thy sacred word,  
Our Saviour is our hope, O Lord,  
The guiding star before us ;  
Our Shepherd, leading us the way ;  
If from Thy paths our footsteps stray,  
To Thee He will restore us ;  
Holy, holy ! ever hear us,  
And receive us, while we gather  
Round Thy throne, Almighty Father.

NICOLAI. 1597.

## XXXI.

### FAREWELL!

YOU have now gone with me nearly to the end; there remains only a tender farewell. We may never know each other here, for books are like winged seeds, flying widely, and bearing fruit no one knows where; but whoever, or wherever, you be, I send you my love! Why not? You are, like myself, a stranger resting here for the night, as a traveller at his inn, and will go forth on the morrow. We both go the same way to the great darkness; to the same judgment throne; to the same everlasting existence. You are my brother or sister, though I have never seen you, and as such, may this book have been "Light from Beyond," indeed, to you, guiding you towards the full glory of the city of them that are saved!

So far as this book is concerned, we are now

nearly at our harbour, and it is almost time to furl the sail, and let go the anchor ; but ere we part, let me gather up into a last word some of the main counsels needed for profiting by the promises as God wishes that you should.

Remember that it is needful for us to train ourselves daily to a hearty and habitual living by faith rather than by sight. The promises shine like light struggling through chinks into a darkened chamber : you can reach and enjoy its fulness only after painful and weary groping towards the far-off brightness. We walk by faith, not by sight, and must content ourselves to have it so till we see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face. We hope to overcome the world, and to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, but every day's experience shows that it will not be in this life. There is no holiness here that is not stained and dimmed by many shortcomings. The roots of sin in our nature are like the shoots of old ivy in a wall ; we may cut them out as we like, and try our best to extirpate them, but while the wall stands, some sucker or other will still break out again ; the only cure is to take the wall down. In all things it "doth not yet

appear what we shall be," but yet, "we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." The sum of the believer's hopes and expectations are his "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Till grace be changed to glory, we must be content to know in part. At the best, we wander over the mountains of myrrh and the hills of frankincense in the pale light of moon and stars; but the day will dawn before long, and the shadows flee away.

Stay your soul, whatever befalls you, with the thought that there is more sweetness and delight in trusting God than in having any earthly blessings whatever without Him. When there is hearty reliance on Him, there must be contentment. We see it in our own children. They never fret, or get anxious about tomorrow, for they know that we, their parents, will duly provide for them; they cast all their care on us, because we care for them. Oh! if we could only do the same with our Father in heaven! What sweetness and joy would it impart in every detail of life! The cup given us by infinite love and wisdom, though hard to



drink at the moment, must needs be for our truest and abiding benefit. "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain." Our lives would be happy enough if we could keep from anxiety about the future, and enjoy to-day, without clouding it with the shadow of to-morrow ; but he alone can do so who abides in the tabernacle of the Almighty, and feels underneath him the everlasting arm.

There is this blessed support in a life of faith, that not one good thing will fail of all that the Lord has promised. There is no fear of disappointment in our expectations from God, so far as we have the warrant of the Scriptures. "The word of the Lord abideth for ever." "He is faithful." "He keeps his covenant for ever." They that sleep in the dust have found that He never changes, but is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; and it will be the same with us. He will return again, some day, and bring his saints with Him, not one wanting, that ever trusted in his grace. He will call his exiles home in due season, and what a welcome will greet them when they rise to meet the Lord in the air, and so are for ever with the Lord !

A great and assured support in all our fears and hesitations lies in the remembrance that the believer is no longer a commoner of nature, but a brother of Him who died for us; bought with his precious blood; no more his own; a captive delivered by the Redeemer's bow and spear, and, as such, his, henceforth. For any who trust in Christ, and live becoming their profession, to be lost, would be for Christ to lose somewhat of that joy He purchased on the cross—would be to make that death of no value, and to rob his love of its sweet reward. But there needs be no fear, for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The promises are, besides, the theme of Christ's all-prevalent intercession, and cannot fail. We have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us, therefore, hold fast our profession. He has power with God as no other high priest ever had. He has passed into the heavens, and is now at the right hand of the Eternal Majesty, our Advocate and

abiding Friend. Are your sins great? So is his merit. Are they many? His blood cleanses from them all. Are you afraid of your own vileness as a hindrance in approaching to God? You may be vile, but He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Ye are complete in Him. God's justice has to do with Him, not with the believer. He will let no one pluck you out of his hand. Safe in Christ, you are safe for ever! Amen, even so, Lord Jesus.

THE END.

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